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SERMONS ON THE GOSPELS

FOR THE

SUNDAYS AND CHIEF FESTIVALS

OF THE

CHURCH YEAR.

BY

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PREFACE.

FOR years the want of a collection of sermons in the English language, similar to the Postils in extensive use for edification in our German churches, has been deeply felt, and the writer has been repeatedly requested to contribute something towards supplying that want. Believing that in a matter of this kind the judgment of others should not be disregarded, he has at last yielded to these solicitations and furnished the manuscript of the sermons forming this volume. For offering them to the public the Board of Publication of the Ev. Lutheran Synod of Ohio and other States is responsible.

The author's reluctance and hesitancy in rendering this service was due in part to other causes than those of questionings and misgivings relative to his ability to meet the want, grave as such considerations are. He has had special reasons for tardy compliance. Leading a busy life and burdened with manifold official duties, he has during the last twenty-five years rarely been able to write out the sermons which he preached. The manuscript on hand from which to make selections was therefore not ample, and only a short time since was he so far relieved from other labors as to afford him any opportunity to supply what seemed to him necessary. Moreover, it is many years since he was pastor of a congregation and had that daily converse with the people which is so effective in suggesting and shaping sermons for the times. Under such circumstances he feared that it might even seem presumptuous in one, whose principal calling for a long period has not been that of a pastor, to undertake such a task. But there is something to be said by way of apology. Prior to his call to educational work the writer was for sixteen years engaged in the active duties of the ministry, and the Lord blessed his labor. To this he may add that, although for nearly a quarter of a century his work has been in another sphere than that of the pastorate, he has never ceased to be a preacher of the everlasting gospel. During not a few of those years there was scarcely a Sunday on which he did not occupy the pulpit, while fre-

quently on other days he had occasion to preach Christ to the people. Perhaps these considerations will serve to shield him from the charge of presuming too much when, in his earnest desire to serve the Master to the full extent of his ability, he consents to the publication of these sermons.

Of the collection here presented some were preached thirty years ago and more, while the larger portion is of a more recent date. It seemed best to the author to retain some of the sermons written in earlier years, notwithstanding that in some formal respects they fail to satisfy his maturer judgment. As the collection is not designed to furnish models for preachers, but edification for the people, it will scarcely be regarded as a fault that some discourses are included which were preached when the writer had charge of a congregation and stood in more intimate relation to the hearers, even though they should be pronounced in some respects inferior to those of later years.

No doubt many who have heard the author in the pulpit will be disappointed when they read his sermons in print. There is much in the living voice that can not be communicated to the pen, and even when the exact words that were spoken are presented to the eye, the discourse never seems exactly the same. But there are special reasons why the sermons heard and the sermons read should seem different in the writer's case. He is not in the habit of writing out his sermons in full; and when he has written them, he is not in the habit of confining himself to his manuscript in preaching them. But in all essential respects they are still the same. The truth in Jesus which it has been his privilege and delight to preach for many years is here set forth, and though some of that human force and fervor which captivates the hearer may seem to be lacking in the printed pages laid before the reader, the vital power cannot be wanting when the Gospel containing it is presented.

Since the Board of Publication has resolved to give these sermons to the public, notwithstanding all the imperfections which the writer recognizes in their form and manner of setting forth the precious Gospel, his sincere desire and prayer is that our blessed Lord, concerning whom they testify and whose strength is made perfect in weakness, may bless them to the salvation of precious souls and to the glory of His great name.

COLUMBUS, O., AUGUST 21, 1888.

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Advent Sunday.

MATT. 21, 1–9.

And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me. And if any man say aught unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them. All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass. And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, and brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set Him thereon. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strewed them in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest.

Dearly Beloved:

To-day begins the Christian year. The Church has another Sun from which it derives light and life than that which shines in the natural heavens. The Sun of Righteousness has risen with healing in His wings. To us a Savior has come, and He is more than all to us. The gospels for these Advent Sundays are designed to prepare for His coming. Advent means coming. He comes to save us — He shall come again to judge us: be ye ready to meet Him!

"The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." This is the grand proclamation of Advent. "Thy King cometh unto thee;" this is the glorious message which our Advent gospel brings us. Not only for those who

lived in the apostles' days was this proclamation made. It is truth for all times and for all men. We too are concerned in it. "For His merciful kindness is great toward us, and the truth of the Lord endureth for ever." Ps. 117, 2. He came to save the world by His obedience unto death; He comes still to apply the merits of that obedience to lost souls and to bring them to His heavenly kingdom. Let us then give earnest heed to the proclamation made anew to us to-day:

THY KING COMETH TO THEE.

That we may consider it profitably let us inquire 1. *Who comes?* 2. *How does He come?* 3. *Why does He come?*

I. "Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass." Who is this King that comes to the holy city, the daughter of Zion, in meekness and lowliness that indicates no royal majesty? It is worth our while to look into the matter. It concerns us. He is more than He seems. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. The proclamation announces the coming of Infinite Majesty, lowly as He appears, and it is of infinite moment to us to recognize Him and give Him the glory which is due.

1. "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh." 1 Tim. 3, 16. The King of kings has become incarnate and dwelt among us. The Lord God omnipotent, who reigns in everlasting majesty in the heavens, has clothed Himself in human flesh, and now makes His entry into the royal city on earth. The multitude shout their hosannas and spread their garments in the way to honor His coming. This is proper and right, for He is worthy. But He is more than they knew and greater than they hoped. They looked for a king such as

are accustomed to walk the earth and manifest their passing splendor, and lo, the Majesty of Heaven has come and appears among them. He is the great King whose coming the prophets foretold and whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. But He rules and reigns in the hearts of men. His kingdom is not of this world. Therefore the crowned heads had nothing to fear for their earthly honors when He came, but had everything to hope for their future glory, since He came as their Savior and the Savior of all men. He willingly rendered unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's. But He was none the less the greatest of all kings. "Nathanael answered and said unto Him, Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the King of Israel." John 1, 49. That is faithful testimony; for so Jesus had been called by the prophets, centuries before the incarnation. "The Lord is King for ever and ever." Ps. 10, 16. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in." Ps. 24, 7.

And the Son of God did not cease to be the King of glory when He came to earth to bleed and die for human sin. The heavenly hosts did not cease to adore Him or to obey Him when He appeared in fashion as a man and took on Him the form of a servant. He was still, while groaning beneath the weight of human sin and woe, God over all, blessed forever! He was the mighty Monarch of the universe even when He suffered Himself to be persecuted and crucified. Surely they err, not knowing the Scriptures, who suppose that He was discrowned and dethroned when He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. The Scriptures testify that the princes of this world knew not the wisdom of God, "for had they known it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." 1 Cor. 2, 8. He was the Lord of glory still even when He was doomed to an ignominious death. He

who died was still true God and Lord of all; for the Holy Spirit says, "Feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood." Acts 20, 28. God the Son shed His blood to purchase the Church, and became incarnate that he He might pay the price.

"Well might the sun in darkness hide
And shut his glories in,
When Christ, the mighty Maker, died
For man His creature's sin."

He who came to the daughter of Zion, meek and sitting upon an ass, was the eternal Son of God, who reigns in infinite majesty co-equal with the Father from eternity to eternity.

But the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. He assumed our nature in order to be able to atone for our sin by suffering its penalty. The Son of God was manifest in the flesh and became the God-Man, true God and true man in one undivided person. In such incarnate form He was and is the King of Zion. The humanity which He assumed was our humanity. He became our Brother. But that does not mean that He laid aside His divinity and ceased to be God and King over all. On the contrary, it means that His humanity was also endowed with powers which do not belong to other men. The human nature was made partaker of the royalty which belongs to the divine. To Him all power was given in heaven and in earth, as He Himself testifies. Matt. 28, 18. He did not choose to use that power always. For our sakes He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death. How else could the gracious work of redemption have been performed by Him who was God over all, and who even as man had all power to crush His foes and escape all their efforts to bring upon Him suffering and death? He came to Jerusalem in lowliness, and did not

appear as the great King that He really was. But He was the great King nevertheless. He is King from eternity as the Son of God; He is the King that was promised to Israel, whose kingdom was now at hand. "The Lamb shall overcome them, for He is King of kings and Lord of lords." Rev. 17, 14. "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ." Acts 2, 36. He who was King from eternity was made flesh and dwelt among us, and now comes, true God and true man, to rule and reign as the Savior in a kingdom established upon His mediatorial work and gathered and governed by His Word.

2. He who comes is thy King. It is thy King, O daughter of Zion; it is thy King, O soul that art condemned in sin and sold into slavery to Satan—thy King, whose power extends over all, whose mercy endureth for ever, and whose grace is full and free. He comes to set up His kingdom; and He will establish it wheresoever He comes, whether you will accept Him or not. Only let it be remembered that if He is rejected in His grace, others will enjoy His blessing and you will be excluded from it, while He still shall reign as King. He will rule over you with His might, if you refuse to let Him rule over you with His mercy unto salvation.

He would guide us to eternal happiness by His truth and reign over us in mercy and goodness. For to this end did He come into the world, that we might be saved and live under Him in His kingdom of truth and righteousness. Thus it is written: "Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto Him, Art Thou a King then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a King.

To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." John 18, 36. 37. It is a kingdom of grace which the Savior has established. In it the Gospel rules. Here there is no application of force and no compulsion. He comes with power to convert and regenerate our sinful hearts, that we may own Him and serve Him and honor Him. He knocks at the door of men's souls and would fain come in and bless them with the blessings of salvation. He waits with patience day after day, often year after year, that by His grace the door may be opened. He calls us and entreats us, but never compels us; and those who persist, notwithstanding all His gifts and entreaties, in barring Him out, are left at last to their madness and misery, while He reigns in peace and blessedness in the hearts that have been opened and have let Him in. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Matt. 23, 37. The great King comes to thee now. He would set up His kingdom in hearts that are yet without hope, and secure better service and higher joy where His reign is recognized.

O soul, receive your King. He is Lord of all; He is Savior of all. The disciples owned Him as their King. When He told them to go into the village and bring the ass and the colt which they should find there, they rendered unquestioning obedience, trusting their Lord's knowledge and might. Question not His power to save and His authority to rule. He is the great King of righteousness and salvation, and He comes to you with spiritual blessings in heavenly places. O soul, receive your King and be blessed in His kingdom!

II. In answering the second question, as to the manner of His advent, we must distinguish between His coming into the world to fulfill all righteousness by His obedience unto death, and His coming now into the hearts of men that they may share the righteousness which His obedience secured. He came to save, and He comes to save still; He came to set up His kingdom, and He comes to set up His kingdom still. But His coming into the world by becoming incarnate and tasting death for every man is different from His coming now to make us partakers of the merits of that death, though there are some notable particulars in which there is a strong resemblance.

1. The Jews had long been expecting the promised Messiah, and many pious children of God were waiting for the consolation of Israel. They knew that He would be a King, for the prophets had plainly foretold it. And now the prophecies were fulfilled and the Son of the Virgin, who was the Eternal Son of God, was approaching the city of David, on whose throne He should sit for ever. But what a disappointment when He came in such lowly guise! He came not at all as men expected, though He came unquestionably as God appointed and prophets predicted.

To the Jews as the chosen people were committed the oracles of God, and they had ample opportunities to know His eternal counsels respecting the Messiah. But they had neglected to search the Scriptures diligently and devoutly, and their teachers had pushed aside the bread of heaven and fed the people on ashes. Therefore when the fulness of the time was come and God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, the long-expected Christ "came unto His own, and His own received Him not." John 1, 11. That God manifest in the flesh, the great King in Zion, should live a life of lowliness and sorrow on earth, the

mountain of human sin bowing Him down, they could not understand nor believe, though it had been told them in divers manners through types and prophecies; and when now the King entered His capital they thought of Him as an earthly monarch with a kingdom of this world. Those who accepted Him as the promised King imagined that Israel—poor, despised, dispersed Israel—should now flourish under His glorious reign and become the admiration and the envy of all the nations of the earth. What a disappointment it must have been to all such expectations to see no trappings of royalty and no pomp and splendor betokening earthly greatness! But it was all according to the appointment of Him whose gold can not be gilded by human art and grandeur, and whose majesty can be apprehended only by faith. "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation." Luke 17, 20. And those who were willing to hear could learn from the Scriptures that thus it is written: "Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee. He is just, and having salvation, lowly and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." Zech. 9, 9. Had they given heed to this, they would have witnessed the exact fulfilment of the prophet's words and would have rejoiced in the great King that came in lowliness to save a lost world. As it was they sought for a little season to supply the want of external magnificence by spreading their garments and branches of palm in the way, but soon broke down, at least many of them, and joined the cry, Crucify Him!

So it always is with poor humanity that will not hear the Word of God, which alone can guide aright. God speaks to man in words of eternal wisdom and life, and yet they prefer their own thoughts. He orders all things well, and yet they are disappointed at the result, though all be according to the revealed counsels of our loving Lord. There was glory and majesty in the King who came in

meekness, but it was not revealed to the eye of flesh. The King was to humble Himself even unto an ignominious death that a kingdom of salvation might be established, and blessed is he whosoever is not offended in Him!

2. But even among those who profess to be His disciples there are some who are offended at His lowly birth and lowly life and lowly death, and perhaps more who are offended at the lowly manner of His coming among men still to dispense the gifts which He has secured by His obedience unto death. For still "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation." It is the still, small voice of God entering the soul, the gentle dew of heaven falling silently upon the heart, that converts the soul and renders it subject to the King, not the pomp and ceremony of man's device, not the pride and parade of human reasoning, not the glitter and gorgeousness of human eloquence. God saves men by the simple means which He has instituted for the purpose, though men never cease inquiring how things that look so lowly can accomplish things so lofty and so grand.

The Holy Spirit has plainly pointed out the means which are used for man's regeneration; let us not neglect the instruction and give place to expectations that must be disappointed. "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ," says St. Paul, "for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." "For after that in the wisdom of God," he says in another place, "the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." 1 Cor. 1, 21. The King comes to us with all His royal power of grace in the words of the Gospel, and those who hear His voice shall live. And so He comes to us by the holy sacrament of baptism, which many regard as powerless because they see simple water, though the Lord Himself comes in it with all His saving power. For thus the King

Himself says: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." John 3, 5. And St. Paul says: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Tit. 3, 5. So too the holy sacrament of the altar was instituted to establish believers in the faith that Christ has died for them, and to strengthen them for the service to be rendered in His kingdom for the glory of the great King's name. For the apostle, moved by the Holy Ghost, writes: "The cup of blessing, which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" 1 Cor. 10, 16. And this is for our peace and comfort, as our Lord says: "Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Matt. 26, 27. 28.

It sounds strange, indeed, to the ears of men who listen merely to the voice of reason, to hear such words. It seems marvelous that the whole mystery of the King's coming into the hearts of men should be made dependent upon the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments. It seems as wonderful that Christ should choose thus unostentatiously, without all pomp and pageantry appealing to the natural man, to enter into human hearts and there exercise His royal power, as it does that He should have chosen in such meekness and lowliness to enter the city of David as the great King of whom prophets foretold. But thus it is written, and thus it pleased the Lord of all to pursue His purpose of compassing the salvation of man. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your

thoughts. For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." Is. 55, 8–11. The kingdom of Christ is a kingdom of believers, and does not rest on the testimony of sense. "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." The King comes unfailingly by His Word and Sacraments: be not faithless, but believing!

III. The purpose of the King's advent is implied rather than explicitly stated in the text. What it was is clearly expressed when our Lord says: "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." John 3, 17.

1. The King did not come visibly into the world, and does not now come by the means of grace, to pronounce condemnation upon men. They deserve that, but He did not come to give them their deserts, and does not come to us in the Church now for that purpose. The time is drawing near when the King of glory shall come to judgment, when every one shall receive according to the deeds done in the body. That will result in condemnation to all that have rejected the Savior and thus died in their sins. Then it will be too late to flee to Him for refuge, for then all accounts are closed. But when the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, He came to seek and to save that which was lost, not to consign the lost to their just damnation. Men were sinners then, and did not feel easy at the announcement that God had come to visit them. They had reason to think of doom when He came among them, for God is a consuming fire, and the wicked flee even when no man pursueth. It was therefore needful that the as-

surance should be given that the King came not to condemn the world. And when we now teach and preach that He cometh still in pursuance of His eternal purpose, it is needful still to impress the truth, that He cometh not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. There is reason for men nowadays also to fear that when the great King comes among us it must be to deal out merited punishment. But He does not come in His Word and Sacrament for that. As He came into the world at His incarnation not to condemn, but to save, so He still comes not to condemn, but to save. He shall come again to judgment, not in lowliness, but in resplendent majesty; but that time is not now. Do not fear your Savior's coming: He has thoughts of peace toward you; He does not deal out now the damnation that is due. Be not afraid to meet your King.

2. He comes to save, only to save. That was the end for which the Word was made flesh. "God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Gal. 4, 4. 5. He was now approaching the holy city, not to set up a temporal kingdom and reign in earthly pomp and gaiety, but to wear a crown of thorns and to be nailed to the cross. That was the purpose for which He humbled Himself and came in the lowliness which is an offence to the haughty hearts of men that know Him not. But it was necessary that He should suffer and die, if we were to escape eternal suffering and death. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed." Is. 53, 5. He came to rescue us from everlasting death, and was now on the way to pay the dreadful price and bear the awful penalty. "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest!"

And now that the great work of redemption is finished through the shedding of His precious blood, He comes among us to make us partakers of the blessings secured. That is the end for which He is present in the Church every day unto the end of the world, and for which the Gospel is preached to all nations and the holy sacraments are to be administered until He comes again to judge the quick and the dead. The great atonement is made, and the grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men. But only he that believeth and endureth in faith unto the end shall be saved. He comes now to work such faith in the hearts of men and to preserve them in it; for of ourselves we cannot believe in Him or come to Him. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Rom. 10, 17. He comes to us now by the Gospel, that being justified by faith we might have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. There is no peace to the soul so long as the curse of sin hangs over it and the sinner's dreadful doom is in prospect. But the Lamb of God hath taken away the sin of the world, and the believer applies to his own soul the assurance that his sin is taken away. He rejoices in this assurance and gives thanks to his merciful Lord. Thus the faith which embraces the righteousness of Christ and justifies before God also purifies the heart and works by love. Therefore it is written also that He purifies unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Whilst He comes to fit us for heaven by His grace, ministered to us in the Word and Sacraments, working faith and preserving us in it, He comes also to enable us to live a life of usefulness in His service on earth to the glory of His great name. He comes to justify and sanctify and save—to draw men unto Himself and lead them safely through this wilderness of their pilgrimage to the promised land.

To-day begins the new church year: will you not,

dear brethren, begin the year by bidding your Savior-King welcome to your hearts and homes, and by living more devotedly under Him in His kingdom? Will you not, while you show Him royal honors, bending your knees in His blessed name and singing Hosannas to your King, honor Him also in your lives by patiently doing His will and perseveringly renouncing your own? He comes to us to-day again, and bringeth salvation: open the gates of your hearts and the King of glory shall come in. That is peace and joy to the soul for ever. He comes to us again to-day: "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest!" Amen.

Second Sunday in Advent.

LUKE 21, 25–36.

And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads: for your redemption draweth nigh. And He spake to them a parable: Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away. And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

Dear Brethren:

Last Sunday we considered the coming of Christ. He came into the world in all lowliness and meekness, "without observation." There was none of the pomp and parade in which earthly kings are wont to indulge. He came not to condemn mankind, worthy as all men were and are of condemnation. He came to save that which was lost. To-day we are again to consider His coming. But our subject is not the same. He came to save, but He shall come again to judge the world. Our text refers to this second coming. In this future advent

He shall come in glory, not in lowliness. The King of kings will then manifest His royal majesty to all. Not to save the lost will be the object of that glorious coming. Those who are unsaved then will remain unsaved for ever. He will come to the final judgment of all the earth: to award to the wicked their merited doom, to bestow upon His believing people the bliss which He secured for them by His first advent. Concerning

CHRIST'S SECOND ADVENT

our text presents three topics for our consideration; namely, 1. *The Prophecy*, 2. *The Consolation*, 3. *The Warning*. May God render us attentive hearers of that which the Spirit saith unto the churches!

I. Our text contains our Lord's prophetic announcement of the signs preceding His coming and of the manner of His second advent.

1. "There shall be signs in the sun and in the moon and in the stars, and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring, men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken." The signs of the Lord's coming, as shown in various places of Scripture, are manifold, some of them taking place long before, some of them but a little while previous to the ushering in of the eventful day. Those mentioned in our text are of the latter kind. They shall appear partly in the works of nature, partly in the human race.

What the signs in the sun and moon and stars shall be is not expressly stated in our text, but that there shall be extraordinary sights and sounds which shall strike terror into the hearts of men is plain from the language employed. And in other passages of Scripture further indi-

cations are given of the wonders that shall take place in the heavenly bodies. Our Lord says, "After the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven." Matt. 24, 29. And St. Peter says, "The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." 2 Pet. 3, 10. This whole visible creation shall undergo changes that forbode its approaching dissolution. Corresponding to the terrible portents in the skies shall be the terrible commotions that tell of coming disaster on earth. Here "distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring." When all is calm and quiet this globe seems so solid and so safe, and men think of no danger. But "heaven and earth shall pass away." And all along the current of history are scattered the indications that they shall be dissolved. The shock of the earthquake and the rush and roar and ruin of the tornado are manifestations of a power in nature to effect destruction and dissolution, and as such they are prophecies of the coming end of all things. It is therefore not mere superstition to see in the unusual phenomena in the heavens above and in the earth beneath, though they may be explained by natural causes, signs of the final consummation foretold in Holy Scripture. But as the end approaches these signs become more conspicuous, and immediately preceding the coming of the Lord they will be so plain in every domain of nature that even those who would not believe the Word of God shall see and tremble, "men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken."

When that time comes men will even be a sign to each other of the approaching catastrophe. The terrible

commotions in sky and earth and sea will be attended by similar commotions in the souls of men. Not only the darkness and the tumult announcing the coming crash, but the dread of horrors that are felt to be approaching shall shake men's hearts as the storm shakes the trees. When these signs take place, the coming of the Lord is very near. Put not off the preparation to meet Him until then; for then, when the heavens and the hearts are shaking, it will be too late.

There are many who feel secure in the present order of things and shake their heads in unbelief when the coming of the Lord is mentioned. Some laugh the Savior to scorn when He in mercy foretells His coming and the signs which are its harbingers. But this too is as He foretells it. Iniquity shall abound, and the love of many shall wax cold. Ungodliness shall be rampant, and the righteous shall be persecuted. In those days of trial and trouble the very elect would be deceived, if this were possible. "When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" The more unbelief lifts its head in defiance of truth and boasts of its triumph, the more reasons have we to heed the signs of the coming judgment, when our Lord's prophecy shall be vindicated and wickedness shall be crushed.

"The day is surely drawing near
When God's Son, the Anointed,
Will with great majesty appear
As Judge of all appointed.
All mirth and laughter then shall cease,
When flames on flames will still increase."

Men laugh at the terrors when they are at a distance. But they will come. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." What prophecy has declared shall be accurately fulfilled.

2. The manner of our Lord's coming is also foretold. "Then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." The Word made flesh, who dwelt among us to save His people from their sins and who to this end was crucified, shall then come again to judge the world. "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." 1 Thess. 4, 16. "And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet." Matt. 24, 31. He shall now manifest His greatness and glory as He chose not to manifest it to the eyes of men at His first advent. The Majesty of heaven shall now appear in majesty, as it is meet when He cometh to judge the quick and the dead. And this second advent will be visible as His first advent was visible. "Then shall they *see* the Son of man coming." When our Lord ascended into heaven the angels said to those who witnessed the scene, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go up into heaven." Acts 1, 11. "Behold He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him." Rev. 1, 7. He shall be seen in His glory.

But terrible as shall be the signs preceding our Lord's coming and as shall be His advent itself to those who know Him not as their Savior, there is great consolation in it all for those who are justified by faith and have peace with God. Consider

II. The Comfort which our text gives in view of our Lord's second advent. The followers of Jesus know in whom they have believed and have no fears of the result. They love the Lord's appearing and shall not be affected by the ruin into which the wicked are hurled. On the

contrary, they find, amid the natural terrors of the scene, ground for spiritual joy. "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. And He spake to them a parable: Behold the fig tree and all the trees; when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand."

1. The ruin that shall come upon the earth shall not overwhelm the people of the Lord. There is "no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Rom. 8, 1. They will indeed feel the solemn import of that awful day. As they are not divested of flesh and blood, they may shrink back at the startling sights and sounds of the coming judgment. But their terror will not be at the Judge and the judgment, but, if it enter their hearts at all, at the wreck of the material world. And this would only be for a little while, as they know themselves safe in the hands of their Savior. The Christian may shrink back from death; this is terrible, apart from any terrors that may await the soul in the realm that lies beyond. He may dread the pain that must be borne before death comes and is overcome. So there may be in believers a dread of the signs in sun and moon and stars, in earth and sea and air, and of the things whose coming they announce; and certainly they will stand in awe before the glory of the King with His radiant attendants. But the evil shall not come nigh them. The damnation denounced upon the ungodly and the destruction that is about to overtake the earth is not for them. They have fled for refuge to the hope set before them, and they are safe, though heaven and earth shall pass away.

2. Nay, more. They not only have the comfort that the approaching judgment shall not bring condemnation

to them, but that now their redemption draweth nigh. When the fig tree and all the trees put forth their leaves, we know that summer is near. Those awful signs of the Lord's coming, appalling as they are to the natural man, are indications of coming joys. The far flashing of artillery, the rattle of musketry, the din of battle, are terrible, but they may be the harbingers of liberty to the down-trodden and oppressed. In all the tumult and destruction there may be thousands who hear good tidings of deliverance. So the awe of the judgment is beyond human utterance, but it brings redemption to millions. Not as though they were but now, when the Lord comes for the final reckoning, made partakers of His righteousness. It is too late for this when the trump shall resound that wakes the dead. But the believer, who always rejoices in the Lord, even while he sojourns in this vale of tears, only now enters into the full enjoyment of his rich inheritance. The troubles of this earthly life are now past and the joys of heaven shall now begin. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." 1 John 3, 2. The full redemption draweth nigh when the Son of man draweth nigh to take His people to their everlasting home of blessedness in heaven. "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them that love His appearing." 2 Tim. 4, 8.

And that appearing is certain. The Lord will surely come and take His people home. "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." The children of Israel, scattered abroad among all nations and wandering without a national home

about the earth, are a standing assurance that all shall be fulfilled. That people has not passed away, and shall not pass away until the Lord comes. And His words are yea and amen forever. They stand sure: all shall be fulfilled in every jot and tittle. Therefore the children of God are comforted, and comfort one another, with these words. They rejoice now in hope of the glory which shall be revealed, and when the Lord comes amid the terrors of the judgment they shall lift up their heads in joy and praise, for the hour of their redemption has come. The Lord comes who has said to them: "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also." John 14, 1–3. Therefore our Lord employs the beautiful parable of the spring-time with its buds and blossoms. When the leaves appear, know that the summer is near; when the signs of our Lord's coming appear, know that your deliverance is near. While men's hearts are failing them because of the coming disaster, yours can be glad of the coming redemption.

And this comfort has a foundation that shall stand when all earthly foundations shall crumble. Heaven and earth shall pass away. They were not made to stand eternally. Their time of dissolution must come. "But my words shall not pass away," saith the Lord. "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away; but the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the Word which by the gospel is preached unto you." 1 Pet. 1, 24. 25. The good tidings of the first advent for your salvation from sin and death, the gracious assurance of the forgiveness of sins through Jesus' blood, the blessed

promise of the inheritance of the saints in light in the mansions of our Father's house,—they all stand firm and sure, and all shall be fully realized when the Son of man shall come again. But be ye ready. Therefore heed

III. The Warning which is given us in connection with the assurance of Christ's coming. "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."

1. Take heed to yourselves. Believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom alone refuge is found in the day of doom, see that you be not led away from Him by the evil that is in the world.

It is needful to keep this warning before us. The temptations to love the world and gratify the flesh are many and strong. Surfeiting and drunkenness have not ceased from the earth. Men made in the image of God still make gods of their belly and debase their powers by enslavement to the flesh. Drunkards and gluttons abound, and on all sides allurements are presented to draw Christians into the snare. Is it a sin to gladden the heart with a glass of wine? Is it a sin to gratify the palate with roasts and pastries? Such are the sophistries with which the tempter entices and misleads. It is not a sin to enjoy the gifts of God's bounty. "For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving. For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." 1 Tim. 4, 4. 5. There is nothing sinful in wine, as there is nothing sinful in meat. But drunkenness and gluttony are sins, and sins of so dangerous a sort that they hinder us in preparing to meet our God when He comes

to the judgment. And to these sins Satan is ever seeking to draw us. Eating and drinking, as they satisfy a desire of our nature, are pleasant, and it is so easy to fall into excesses that blunt the moral feelings and unfit for watchfulness and prayer. And just because the sin and the mischief lie in the abuse, not in the use, many are led to destruction in these paths of pleasure. How necessary it is to watch in this regard is evinced by the fact that even some Christians, seeing the sad effects of drunkenness in the misery of the drunkard and his family, but seeing no such evils resulting from surfeiting or gluttony, have confounded the use of God's gifts, so far as drinks are concerned, with their abuse, and pronounced even a temperate use of wine a sin, whilst gluttony, whose temporal effects are not so conspicuous, is practiced without a scruple. Has it not even occurred that churches which are fanatical in their insistence upon total abstinence from all intoxicating drinks, have indulged and encouraged others to indulge in surfeiting at their own suppers? The devil is quite content that you should preach total abstinence from intoxicants as a requirement of God, if you will only consent to be intemperate in eating; nay, he finds delight in having God's Word perverted, and knows that eventually that must prove to his advantage, even when it seems a perversion in favor of stricter virtuousness. Beware of drunkenness; beware of surfeiting: they war against the soul.

But take heed, too, that your hearts be not overcharged with the cares of this life. That also stands in the way of a proper readiness for the coming of the Lord. And in that there is the greater danger because such cares seem justified at the bar of reason as necessary; and therefore the world has no fault to find with them, as it has with drunkenness that results in suffering or crime. Overcharging the heart with earthly cares is therefore one

of the most common sins among us, and many are surprised to find it pronounced a sin at all. The scriptural rule that we should, as stewards of our Lord, discharge faithfully the duties of our calling and let Him provide, accepting thankfully from His hand what He is pleased to bestow and being content with this, is but by too many regarded as antiquated and impracticable in our money-making age. Vocations are changed with no motive but greed for filthy lucre, and ways are resorted to of gaining gold that even worldlings would rather conceal than defend. When men are no longer satisfied with God's government, seeking other professions than those which God has assigned them and for which they are fitted; when serving our God and our neighbor is a secondary consideration in our business affairs, if it is recognized as an object at all, while acquiring wealth is the paramount aim; when even the demands of righteousness and honesty, to say nothing of charity, are subordinated to this prime object, so that getting money, honestly if possible, but getting money any way, is the great motive of labor and zeal,—the cares of this life are overcharging the soul and unfitting it for the love of our Lord's appearing and for His joyful reception when He comes. "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." 1 Tim. 6, 8. 9. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and the cares of this life will not prove your ruin.

2. Watch and pray. Be on the alert that that day come not upon you unawares. Watch, for Satan and the world and the flesh lie in wait to deceive and to destroy. Give them no opportunity to entrap you or beguile you. Watch, that you may be ready when the Lord shall come. "Take ye heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is. For the Son of man is as a man taking a far

journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore; for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly He find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." Mark 13, 33–37. And "pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." There is no strength in us; therefore we must take refuge in Him whose grace is sufficient for us. There is no worthiness in us: He is made to us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. Therefore to Him must we betake ourselves in prayer, that by His grace we may abide in Him and be clothed in His merits. Only thus can we stand before Him; without His righteousness we must be banished from His presence forever. Therefore continue instant in prayer. He who does not pray does not realize his danger, and does not appreciate the divine mercy and divine power by which alone we can escape from the wrath to come. Watch constantly, pray incessantly, that the judgment day come not upon you as a snare for your destruction.

As a snare will it come upon all, in the sense that it will spring upon men at an hour that they think not. But there is a difference also in this respect between those whose hearts are overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and cares of this life, and those who watch and pray that they may escape the destruction. The former are caught as in a snare and perish; the latter are prepared, and are in that respect not taken unawares. It is therefore the unbelieving upon whom that day shall come as a destroying snare. "For when they shall say peace and safety, then suddenly destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not es-

cape." 1 Thess. 5, 3. And that there is a difference between those who heed and those who neglect the warning is shown in the following verse, where the apostle says, "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief." No one knows the hour, and therefore it will come at a time in which it was not definitely expected even by Christians, although they stand in expectation of it all the time, and are therefore not overtaken by it as by a thief of whose coming nothing was known. If the definite time were known, they might relax their vigilance until the hour approaches; but as it is not known, they are aware that the very moment in which they cease to watch might be that in which the cry goes out, The Lord cometh. The only way of safety is that of constant readiness to meet Him.

But some heed not the warning, and the judgment shall come upon them as a snare. "There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." 2 Pet. 3, 3. 4. "As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Matt. 24, 38. 39. Many will not believe it, but make a mock of it; many who believe it in general will not prepare to meet Him, but think that there is time enough in the future yet to attend to this. Thus many will be overwhelmed by sudden horror: some engaged in dark deeds of crime, some whirling the wanton waltz in revelry, some seeking to gain the whole world and losing their own souls. Darkness falls upon the earth and all creation quakes; shrieks

and groans and unavailing cries rend the air: the Lord has come, and the judgment falls upon the unpardoned and unprepared world as a snare. O, be ye ready: that hour in which you grow careless may be the hour of His coming.

The day of wrath, that dreadful day,
When heaven and earth shall pass away,
What power shall be the sinner's stay?
How shall he meet that dreadful day?

When shriveling like a parched scroll
The flaming heavens together roll,
And louder yet, and yet more dread
Resounds the trump that wakes the dead.

O, on that day, that wrathful day,
When man to judgment wakes from clay,
Be Thou, O Christ, the sinner's stay,
Though heaven and earth shall pass away. Amen.

Third Sunday in Advent.

MATT. 11, 2–10.

Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto Him, Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me. And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Dear Brethren:

The gospel lessons for the past two Sundays showed us that Christ has come to save the world, and that He shall come again to judge it. If we would escape the wrath that is to come, we must cling to Him as our only hope and help. That Jesus is the Christ, who has come according to the eternal counsel of God to deliver mankind from death, the Scriptures everywhere testify; and of this there must be no doubt in our minds, if we would have the peace which the Gospel is designed to impart. For it will avail us little to know that Christ has come in lowliness, and that He will come again in great glory, if we do not know Him and do not know where to find Him.

We must know Him, that we may by faith cling to Him. Our text to-day refers us to Jesus, whom the Jews refused to own as the Messiah, and shows us that He is indeed the Christ and the Savior of the world. The evidence is here presented that the promised Messiah has come, and that Jesus is He. Let us consider the

TESTIMONY THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST.

That testimony is twofold. We have 1. *The witness of John the Baptist*, and 2. *The witness of Jesus Himself.*

I. John the Baptist bears testimony to Jesus that He is really the Christ. That testimony is indeed not directly contained in our text. In the estimation of some, on the contrary, the record before us is an impeachment of John as a witness. That is a reason for looking into the subject. The testimony which the Baptist bears is not invalidated by the statement in our gospel lesson, but rather established and confirmed by the testimony which Christ bears to the character of the witness. Let us examine the facts presented as bearing upon the testimony of John, and then consider his testimony to Jesus as the Christ.

1. "When John had heard in prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples and said unto them, Art Thou He that should come, or look we for another?" What induced him to send these men on such a mission? Some answer that he had himself become uncertain about it and desired to elicit facts for a new examination of the subject. Others reply that he had no doubts in his own mind, but that he saw how his disciples were tried, and desired to have evidence furnished them which would remove any rising doubts.

It may be well to remark, in passing, that such a difference of opinion as regards the motive of the Baptist furnishes not a shadow of proof for the allegation which

is made in the interest of unbelief, that the Scriptures are not sufficiently clear to produce certainty, and that honest men will differ, and have a just right to differ, notwithstanding the revelation of truth given in Holy Scripture. Men have differed in their explanation of John's motives. That is true. But it is not true that this is a proof of the obscurity of God's Word and the uncertainty of its doctrines. Not a word is said in the text about John's motive. If that were told us, we would know it and be sure about it. But it is not told us, and therefore different opinions are entertained. We do not know, not because the Scriptures are not plain, but because they do not tell us. If they told us, we would know whether John sent his disciples to Jesus to make inquiry because he himself doubted, or because his disciples doubted, or because some other motive actuated him. But the record does not say, and we are left to gather from the circumstances what seems to us probable. No wonder therefore that the opinions of readers are not always the same.

Moreover, the inferences which are drawn and the explanations which are given of the facts are not in such conflict with each other as those who would cast suspicion upon the perspicuity of Scripture would have us believe. There certainly were reasons why John should be tempted and troubled in his lonely prison, suffering for righteousness' sake and disabled in the great work to which he had been called. It was a severe trial, and if gloomy thoughts crowded upon him, which would induce him to seek assurance in the renewed testimony of the Christ to whom he had himself borne witness, that was nothing to excite wonder under the circumstances. And if there was the temptation of troublesome questionings in his own mind about Jesus, in whose cause he was enduring hardness, it would be natural that his disciples should be similarly troubled,

and this would only furnish an additional inducement to seek strengthening for himself and for them through the witness of the Lamb of God Himself. He may have sought an answer to the question, "Art Thou He that should come, or look we for another?" for his own sake, or for his disciples' sake, or for the sake of both, or for the sake of others, to whom the tidings were to be brought and to whom the evidence should be furnished. We do not know. The record tells us only the fact that such a message, embodying the question, was sent by John. The motive for sending it we can only surmise.

But what seems to me important in the matter is that no such interpretation be given of the fact as would detract from John's testimony that Jesus is the Christ. I do not say that he would be disqualified as a witness, if he himself had subsequently given way to doubts and needed new evidence to convince him of the fact to which he before testified. But it does not seem to me needful to make any concessions that would in any way or to any mind weaken that testimony. John may have been tempted, and in an unhappy moment may have become impatient and manifested weakness. That is nothing strange in our poor human nature, even when the heart is renewed and supported by divine grace. He that is without sin, let him cast the first stone. But John was not a weak character, whatever may have been his failing in the dark moment of temptation. He was not a man who doubted everything and was sure of nothing. Our Lord would not bear the witness which He did of John, if he had been a weak and vacillating man whose testimony was without value and without weight. After John's messengers had departed, "Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what

went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses." These words do not imply that it was impossible for John to be troubled even by passing doubts; but they do indicate that he was a man of more than ordinary nerve and firmness, inured to hardships, and not likely to be thrown off his guard by the tribulations which all must expect in their journey through a world that lieth in wickedness. The Baptist was severely tried, but he was not a reed driven hither and thither by every wind of trouble that blew over him. He was in prison now, and suffering much, most of all that he was no longer able to ply his vocation as the harbinger of Christ; but he was accustomed to a life of hardship, and never wore soft clothing or dwelt in kings' houses. He was no poor weakling that would abandon his warfare when the enemy showed fight. Even when he had sent his embassy to Jesus, the Lord gave him the testimony that he was "more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before Thy face, which shall prepare Thy way before Thee." That office he fulfilled, and nothing in this lesson could, without disregarding the words of our Savior, be construed into an evidence of any unfaithfulness on his part in discharging it. He was a witness that Jesus is the Messiah, and his testimony is not disparaged by the narrative before us.

2. That testimony challenges our earnest attention. Our Lord tells us that he was more than a prophet. For while the prophets have spoken words that are sure and give evidence that is in every respect trustworthy, they by the Spirit of God spoke of a Messiah that was still future, while John had the eminent privilege and honor of pointing to the Messiah who had already come and of bearing

witness to the King who was already present. And to Him he was especially called of God to bear witness. He was to prepare the way before the Messiah, preaching repentance and announcing the kingdom of God as at hand. "There was a man sent from God," the evangelist says, "whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light." John 1, 6–8. As a specially appointed witness his testimony merits special consideration.

His appearance and work in accordance with the prophetic announcement, as the harbinger of the Messiah, is evidence that Jesus of Nazareth is He that should come, and that we are not to look for another. In the prophecy of Malachi it is written, "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to His temple." Mal. 3, 1. The advent of this messenger should be a sign that the long promised and long expected Messiah was near. That this forerunner was John the Baptist is beyond question. He was "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make His paths straight." He "preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose." Mark 1, 3. 7. Our Lord Himself testifies in the text, "This is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before Thy face, which shall prepare Thy way before Thee." The mission of Christ's forerunner was clearly pointed out centuries before the set time for the deliverance of Israel had arrived, and that mission was fulfilled in every particular by John. His work in preparing the way for the advent of the Messiah is convincing testimony that Jesus,

who came after Him and whose way was prepared, is the Christ, the promised Savior of the world.

But the Baptist also bears explicit testimony of this in words that leave no room for doubt. He was especially endowed and commissioned to be a witness for Christ at His advent, pointing to the present Savior and making Him known to all who were willing to hear. Many prophets and righteous men desired to see what He saw and testified, but died without the sight. His eyes were permitted to behold God manifest in the flesh, and his lips were permitted to bear witness that this is the very Christ of God who shall save the people from their sins. When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to inquire into his claims and office, "John answered them saying, I baptize with water, but there standeth one among you whom ye know not; He it is who coming after me is preferred before me." John 1, 26. 27. "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. This is He of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me; for He was before me. And I knew Him not; but that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not; but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God." John 1, 29–34. The Scripture is very particular in showing us how John knew that Jesus is the Christ, that our faith might have a firm foundation. The Holy Spirit Himself made John sure of the person whom God sent to be the Savior of the world,

and thus fully qualified him "to bear witness of the Light, that all men through Him might believe." John 1, 7. And faithfully did he perform his work of testifying, never growing weary of directing men to Jesus as the Lamb of God on whom all our sins were laid and who bore them all away. The gracious promise of God that He would send a Redeemer for the consolation of Israel, who should bear the penalty of our sin, that we might escape its condemnation and live, is fulfilled. Christ has come, and John, who came for a witness, points to Jesus of Nazareth and exclaims, "Behold the Lamb of God." Hear and heed the strong and earnest testimony. But hear, further,

II. The Testimony of Jesus. Both His works and His words bear witness. When John's disciples proposed the question, whether He is the one that should come, our Lord replied: "Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached unto them. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me."

1. These wonderful works bear witness that He is the Christ, because they fulfill prophecies respecting the miracles of the Messiah. "He will come and save you," says the prophet Isaiah. "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing." Isaiah 35, 4–6. It was to be expected that when the marvelous plan of redemption should be executed upon the earth, marvelous works would accompany it,—that God would show Himself in power and give proof of His presence. Miracles were foretold, and when the time came they were wrought. They declare the Son of man to be the Son God.

His wonderful works proclaim His power and mercy. It is true, mere men have performed miracles; and our Savior says, "Verily, verily I say unto you, He that believeth in me, the works that I do he shall do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go to the Father." John 14, 12. But these very words show us that such wonders are not performed by human power. He that believeth shall do them. The ability is not in man, but in Him who is believed in and in whose name they are performed. In the name of the Lord the apostles and saints of old did their mighty works. It was never in virtue of a power in themselves, as was the case in the miracles of Jesus. The magicians imitated the miracles of Moses, and wonders are done still by the aid of Satan. But these are lying wonders. They prove nothing but that God permits the devil to practice his arts in the world, and that men must beware of the liar and deceiver. It was otherwise with the mighty works of Jesus. They were full of love and mercy as well as of power; they were mighty deeds performed in the interest of truth and righteousness; and they were done by a power that is inherent in Him, not in the name and power of another. They thus show that He was the promised Messiah. They fulfill the prophecies concerning the works of Christ, and they are the seal of God's approbation, declaring Him to be the beloved Son in whom He is well pleased. Hence it is written of Him that He is "a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you." Acts 2, 22.

And what an array of mercies was that on which the disciples of John were directed to look! Men who had groped in darkness were made to see the glorious light and all the beauty which it displays. Men to whom all creation was mute were made to hear the voices by which

all nature praises its God. Men who were paralyzed in every limb were made to leap with joy as they heard the voice of the Lord. Men who were leprous and outcasts from society were made whole and clean, and restored to sweet converse with their kind. Even the dead heard His voice and came forth at the bidding of His almighty word. What mighty miracles were wrought by this same Jesus, and how full of grace!

And yet these are not the grandest and most glorious of His merciful miracles. The greatest of all is that which is mentioned last and which we are so apt to think the least. "To the poor the gospel is preached." That is the crowning miracle and mercy. It passes all human thought that the sovereign Lord, against whom all men's sins have been committed and whose holiness requires and declares their punishment, should proclaim good news of salvation to the condemned. It is on this account that in the 35. chapter of Isaiah, where the miracles of our Lord are described, we read these words instead of those in our text, "The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." By the Gospel the blind and deaf and lame and leprous shall be restored in a spiritual sense: they shall see the Sun of righteousness and hear the glad tidings of great joy; they shall be cleansed from their sin and walk before God in the beauty of holiness. Verily, this is the greatest of all miracles that "to the poor the gospel is preached."

To the poor, whom the rich in their haughtiness despise—as if the poor were more and the rich were less than miserable sinners—the King of glory brings a message of mercy. The poor, who live and labor amid many privations and whom many seek to crush in their helpless-

ness, have the blissful tidings brought to them that they have fallen heirs to an immense estate. They shall be heirs of their heavenly Father's boundless wealth, and joint-heirs with the beloved Son who came to save them. Is not that a miracle surpassing all other miracles that man has ever known? And not only to the poor in earthly goods, but to all the poor who know their sin and feel their misery are the words of this salvation sent. To the poor who have heard the law and who see that it cannot save them, the good tidings are preached that the Savior has come to them in their helplessness and hopelessness, and that through Him they shall find grace and inherit the kingdom of glory. This greatest of all miracles bears witness that Jesus is the Christ, and that all the ends of the earth may come to Him, assured that they shall find salvation.

2. But witness is borne by our Lord's words as well as by His works. It is true that He does not directly and expressly say, I am the Christ that should come. There was no need to give such an answer to the question of John. The disciples should hear and see, and should report to their master what they heard and saw. That would be a sufficient answer to his question. But His words plainly enough imply that He is the Christ. All His preaching to the poor with its heavenly consolation declares it. But especially the words, "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me," involve His testimony that He is the Christ and that men are not to look for another. It is as though He should say: That I am He is manifest from what you see and hear. It might not indeed seem so from the life of lowliness which you otherwise see me lead, nor from the fact that my faithful witness, John the Baptist, is permitted to languish in prison. But so it is, nevertheless; and blessed are ye, if ye be not

offended in me, who humble myself even unto death for your salvation. There was that in our Lord's life at which some might have stumbled; but they should only believe, and all that is dark would become perfectly clear, if not now, at least then, when they should walk by sight in the heavenly land. The words mean: I am He; do not take offense at my humiliation for your salvation, and conclude that I am not He, because my glory does not yet fully appear.

And this warning is given for all time and to all men. Let not any seeming inconsistency with the demands of reason or wishes of the heart be an offense to you when you read and hear the things concerning Christ, and thus stand in the way of your accepting the testimony that Jesus is He. As the disciples of John had that to encounter which proved their faith, so have all Christians similar conflicts now, and must expect to have them. We cannot pass through the scenes of this life and enter heaven without probation. He that endureth unto the end, the same shall be saved. Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. But, alas! so many are offended in Jesus because of His lowly birth and ignominious death, or because of His humiliating teaching of salvation by grace alone, that God, and not we, may have all the glory. The doctrines of our Lord are not such as to satisfy the proud heart, and many stumble at the requirement to take reason captive under the obedience of faith. But blessed are they who believe and are not offended in Him. In due time they shall see and be satisfied.

The evidence that Jesus is the Christ is sufficient to convince all who do not close their hearts to the testimony of the Spirit. Hear the Savior; come to Him, and you will not fail to become convinced. The witness of the

Spirit in your own heart will make you sure. Do not resist the word and exclude that testimony. There is salvation in no other; there is full and complete salvation in Him.

Ye wanderers come, 'tis mercy's voice;
The gracious call obey;
Mercy invites to heavenly joys,
And can you yet delay?
Dear Savior, draw reluctant hearts,
To Thee let sinners fly,
And take the bliss Thy love imparts,
And drink and never die. Amen.

Fourth Sunday in Advent.

JOHN 1, 19–28.

And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who are thou? And he confessed and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom you know not; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.

Dear Brethren:

The preaching of John the Baptist aroused the Jews. It elicited more attention than the events of every day occurrence. This is evident from the fact that they sent an embassy from Jerusalem to make inquiry concerning him, and from the further fact that the delegation sent was composed of priests and Levites. No doubt the question was debated among them whether he was not the Messiah. Many were waiting for Him, many were anxiously expecting Him. It is true, not all who were interested in His advent were earnestly waiting for the Consolation of Israel. There were other thoughts occupying the minds of men besides those of a spiritual kingdom in which the Son of David should reign in righteousness. There were many whose thoughts did not rise above the pomp and glory of

this world, and who were looking for this too in the advent and reign of the Messiah. But whatever may have been their expectation, they were interested in John and desired to have more information about him. Therefore they sent such an imposing committee of investigation, that they might learn all about

THE PREACHER IN THE WILDERNESS.

They had no difficulty in finding out I. *Who he is*, and II. *What he preaches.* That is what we are to learn also, and may the Holy Spirit enable us to learn it with profit.

I. "This is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not." He did not hesitate to tell them WHO HE IS. We should learn what he tells them, and should follow his example in frank confession.

1. It is important for us also to learn who the preacher in the wilderness is, and we should heed his answer, which is written for our learning. He tells us who he is not as well who he is.

First, there was reason for telling them who he is not. They had wrong impressions and made wrong suppositions regarding him. Therefore he plainly corrects their errors and tells them that he is not the Christ, nor Elias, nor that prophet. He confessed, I am not the Christ. If he had been ambitious of honors, he had the best opportunity to pass himself off for the expected Messiah. The people were awaiting the coming of the Savior, and there were indications which rendered it probable that John was he. But he confessed, and denied not, but confessed, I am not the Christ. He did not

deny the Lamb of God whose way he was to prepare and of whom he was to be a witness. That might have brought him some transient honor, but it would have brought everlasting death to himself and perhaps to thousands of others. He walked in truth and lowliness before God, and confessed that he was not worthy to unloose the shoe's latchet of Christ. "The people were in expectation, and all men mused whether he were the Christ or not." Luke 3, 15. But he confessed, I am not the Christ. "And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? and he saith I am not." Not even this honor did he desire, although he might without wrong have accepted it. In one respect he was Elias. This prophet had centuries before been taken in a chariot of fire to heaven. But he was to come again. It is written in the prophecy of Malachi: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord, and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." Mal. 4, 5. 6. John the Baptist was not this Elijah in person. And yet he was Elijah in the sense meant by the prophet, as the Holy Spirit interprets his words when He says of John by the mouth of the angel: "He shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." Luke 1, 17. He was the forerunner of the Messiah, who should prepare His way in the spirit and power of Elias; for our Lord says of him: "This is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before Thy face, which shall prepare Thy way before Thee." And again: "If ye will receive it, This is Elias, which was for to come." Matt. 11, 10. 14. So he says in another place: "I say unto you that Elias is come already, and they know him

not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. . . Then the disciples understood that He spake unto them of John the Baptist." Matt. 17, 12. 13. He might therefore have claimed any honors which belong to Elijah as the forerunner of the Messiah. But he was not Elias in person, and desired nothing but to prepare the way of the Lord, and therefore confessed that he was not Elias. Then they asked him, "Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No." No doubt they referred to the prophet like Moses who was promised to the children of Israel and of whom we read in Deut. 18, 18: "I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I command him." That prophet was Christ, though they supposed that the words referred to another. That other they thought John might be. He tells them that he is not. He is not that prophet in the sense meant by the Holy Spirit, for he confessed that he is not the Christ; nor in the sense in which they understood the words, for there is no such prophet other than Christ. And yet John, who declines all honors of Messiah or prophet, has this high testimony of our Lord: "What went ye out to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before Thy face, which shall prepare Thy way before Thee." Matt. 11, 9. 10. While the greatest work of the prophets was to tell of the coming Christ and cheer the hearts of the people with the prospect opened up in the future, John has the distinguished privilege of pointing to the Christ come among them as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Him would he confess before all people, and therefore he declined all titles and honors that would divert attention from Him.

But secondly, all the more was he desirous that all

men should know who and what he was. After he had answered their various questions in the negative, "then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He saith, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as saith the prophet Isaiah." He is nothing in himself, and whatever importance could attach to him is owing to the relation in which he stands to another. He is but a voice—the voice of one crying in the wilderness. He originates nothing. He merely lends his voice to another, who has a message of mercy and of peace to declare to men. But in representing himself as such a voice he sets forth clearly enough that he is himself the fulfilment of prophecy and the herald of the Messiah, coming in the spirit and power of Elias. As such herald he has a high vocation that makes him more than a prophet. For the Spirit of the Lord was upon him and enabled him to point out the Christ of God that had appeared among men, as he was enabled to prepare the way for him among the people. He was a messenger of the Lord, preaching in the wilderness of this world, into which the Guide and Helper had come to lead into the promised land. But he was only the voice, the Word that was God and that was made flesh was the content of his preaching. To Him he pointed; to Him he directed all his hearers; his whole work was that of a servant seeking to honor his Lord. "He must increase, but I must decrease;" that was the import of his word and work. He was a preacher that desired to be nothing, that Christ, the Lamb of God, might be all.

2. As such he is an example to all preachers in all time; and not only to preachers, but to all children of God in all time, as one who makes a bold confession for the glory of the Master.

First, he is an example to all preachers. There are but too many of those called to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ who have an eye to their own gain and glory, instead of directing all their energies to the winning of souls and the glory of the Savior. Some want money, and are willing to live and to preach so as to please the people in order to get it. Some want honors, and are willing to suppress truth and sacrifice righteousness in order to secure them. Some love ease, and will not press the claims of the gospel if it costs them self-denial and cross-bearing. The sinfulness of our human nature shows itself frequently in the ambassadors of Christ as well as in the people to whom they are sent. It is necessary that they should watch and pray, and the contemplation of every noble example in the conduct of the great office is a blessing. Such an example is the humble Baptist. In his preaching he desired to be but the voice of the Lord, not setting forth his own wisdom or virtue, not feeding the people on the husks of science or the blossoms of literature, but preaching the truth in Jesus unto salvation, and feeding souls with the bread of life which nourishes and satisfies. In his conduct he was devoted and self-denying, seeking no pleasures and profits and honors for himself, but concerned only to prepare the way of the Lord and direct sinners to Him as the Savior of the world. He was no reed shaken by the wind, and not a man clothed in soft raiment, but one who boldly denounced sin and unrighteousness, though it cost him his personal liberty and his life, and who did not grow weary in pointing to the Lamb of God, though his fidelity and love brought him persecution and death. He was a preacher who feared God and therefore was not afraid of man, and who received the commendation of our Lord for his fidelity. May other preachers learn of him!

But, secondly, he was an example by his honest con-

fession to all the children of God. They too are tempted to exalt themselves and be something in their own eyes, instead of being something to the praise of the Savior's grace. They are enticed by the pleasures and riches and honors of the world, and are but too prone to grow weary in their Christian pilgrimage when the roads are rough and the storms are fierce. But too many shrink from the confession of Christ when it costs them something. Our poor human nature wants to bear no crosses, but seeks only to wear crowns and live in luxury and affluence. Even the confession, "I am not the Christ," we are slow to make in all its depth of import. Brethren, has not the thought sometimes entered your own hearts that you could do something to render yourselves acceptable to God? Have you not now and then given ear to the suggestion that, after all, a man must acquire some righteousness of his own before he can be accounted righteous in the court of heaven? Has not occasionally the idea entered your mind and been entertained, that the holiness in which you purpose to live in the future will make some amends for the sins committed in the past, and that God will cancel the accumulated guilt in consideration of the acquired merit? The self-righteous thought and feeling finds such easy access to our souls, that if we are not constantly on our guard it will take possession and banish all claims of grace. And when a man thinks that he can be his own savior, when his own work seems to him sufficient to atone for his sin and render him acceptable to God, does he not refuse to confess that he is *not* the Christ, but rather claim that he is the Savior that takes away his own sin, and deny that Christ is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world? Let us follow the example of John, desiring no honors for ourselves, especially making no pretensions to be the Christ, but as sinners trusting in the Savior adopt the saying: "He must increase, but I must de-

crease." That this may be the result of our considering the preacher in the wilderness, let us give heed to

II. WHAT HE PREACHES. "He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Isaiah." "There standeth one among you whom ye know not; He it is who coming after me is preferred before me." "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him and saith, Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." He preaches repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. The voice cries, Make straight the way of the Lord. The Lord is coming, prepare ye the way for Him into your hearts and into the hearts of the people. He comes to establish His kingdom, and lo, that kingdom is within you. Close not your hearts against Him.

By reason of sin man is unable of himself to do anything good. He is spiritually helpless, as the apostle says: "You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." Eph. 2, 1. Only when the Holy Spirit makes alive is there any spiritual life. By his natural powers man cannot therefore prepare himself for the reception of the Savior. Hence it would seem as if it were useless to preach, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight." But it is not so. Let the word of the law, which works in your souls the knowledge of sin, which pronounces condemnation upon your iniquity, and upon you on account of it, and which brings you no power to put away the iniquity and shows you no way to escape the condemnation,—let that word do its work in you. It will be a schoolmaster to lead you to Christ. Do not drown the voice of conscience by riotous living; do not hinder the perception of its meaning by thoughtlessness or want of attention; do not pervert its sense and prevent

the understanding of its import by sophistic evasions and miserable subterfuges. Your flesh will be likely to urge objections of various sorts. Can the sin that is in me be so damnable, it will argue, when I cannot help its being there and was not personally instrumental in putting it there? Will the Lord condemn me for a lack of righteousness which was not originally my choice? If I do the best I can, will not that be satisfactory to the Lord of all the earth, who will surely do right? May a man not, in the little space of time he has to live, enjoy the good things of the world, and is it at all likely that such enjoyment must end in everlasting misery? Such false reasonings will arise against the accusing voice of conscience, and you may listen to the sophistries, refuse to let the light shine upon your sinful condition and make your true state known to yourselves, and thus thwart the purpose of God in giving us the law. Thus the soul is not led to despair of itself and the way of the Lord is not made straight. Men are not converted when they refuse to let the law show them their state of death and condemnation. And when conversion has taken place, how often do not false reasonings and carnal affections hinder the recognition of the depth of our depravity and thus prevent the appreciation of the heights of divine grace! But too often we permit the world and the flesh and the devil to hide our sin or make it seem insignificant, so that we do not sincerely repent and thus daily put off the old man. Let us hear, let us heed the preaching of the Baptist, and deal honestly with ourselves and with the law of our Maker, that we may make straight the way of the Lord in our own hearts.

But as the Lord has come that the world through Him might be saved and the good tidings of a Redeemer might be unto all people, we are to make straight the way of the Lord into the hearts of others also. Every convert

to Christianity receives the commission, Preach the Gospel to every creature. Every Christian is a missionary. And the first work to be done is that of making straight the way of the Lord. The law of God must be set forth in its deep spiritual import, that sin may become exceeding sinful in the eyes of the hearers, that they may know themselves condemned without any hope of salvation in themselves, and that they may be driven to cry: Men and brethren, what must we do to escape the damnation of hell! All refuges of lies must be destroyed, and the sinner's doom kept steadily before the conscience, that the way may thus be prepared for the preaching of salvation through the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

2. And that was what the prophet preached, in the second place, and what must be the import of all preaching. "They asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water, but there standeth one among you whom ye know not; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose." Who that person was, the circumstances sufficiently indicated; but that there might be no room for doubt in a matter so momentous, he stated expressly that the Christ was among them and that Jesus was the promised King and Savior. "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is He of whom I said, After me cometh a man which was preferred before me; for He was before me." John 1, 29. 30. It was well understood that to institute baptism could not belong to man, and the inquiry was therefore natural and proper, by what authority John presumed to baptize, if he was not Christ or Elias or that prophet. In reply he pointed to

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that Lamb of God whose ambassador he was, and who not many days hence would pour out the Holy Ghost in the form of tapers of fire, and thus confirm John's testimony and John's baptism by an extraordinary baptism with the Holy Ghost and with fire. He had already come, and now stood among them. On Him the sins of the world were laid and he should bear them all away. Death and everlasting damnation was every sinner's due, but as a father pitieth his children, so the God of all pitied His fallen creatures and resolved to send them a Savior, who came into the world when the fulness of time was come. He had now appeared, and to John was entrusted the office of pointing Him out and directing people to Him as their Deliverer. Those who fled to Him for refuge found peace for their souls, because there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. But He was the Savior not only of the people who lived when He sojourned in the flesh on earth. He is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, and John points us also to Him as our Savior, as all preachers of the Gospel have the commission to direct souls to Him as the Redeemer from death and the Giver of everlasting life. The curse that is upon us is the curse of sin. That is the source of all our misery in this world; that is the source of endless misery beyond the grave. But behold the Lamb of God: He taketh away the sin of the world, and therefore takes away every cause of wo, and offers eternal life and bliss instead.

Brethren, hearken to this plain and humble preacher in the wilderness, and give ear to his precious preaching of hope, of deliverance, of blessedness. To you also is the word of salvation sent. You are among the doomed because of sin, you are among the redeemed because of grace. Hearken to the precious preaching which brings to you the Lamb of God who has borne away your sins and has

opened the heavens for you. And as you heed the preacher in this wilderness of sin and wo in which we too are living, and by grace lay to heart the good tidings and rejoice in Him, tell to others too about the mighty Savior, the merciful Deliverer from damnation, so that you too, confessing Christ, as it is meet, may join the whole host of God's people in calling to men: Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Amen.

Christmas.

LUKE 2, 1–14.

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria. And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judæa, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; because he was of the house and lineage of David: to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.

Dear Brethren in the Lord:

Christmas has come and our hearts are glad. It seems as if every human being were rejoicing, and happy voices are heard all around us. The children are full of glee, and older persons seem young again amid the surrounding tokens of happiness. And there is reason why all the earth should be jubilant and all the air should be full of song. The day commemorates the most joyful event in the annals of time. Its glorious proclamation is, "Be-

hold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." Well may every heart be glad and every house be joyful. Not that all the merriment and glee around us results from a proper appreciation of God's great Christmas gift to man. Some of it, much of it, is no doubt of the earth, altogether earthy. But there is in that gift enough to make all the world rejoice, and if there are some who take part in the rejoicings without sharing the blessings which render the joy pure and abiding, the gifts and blessings are none the less a reality. If only all would realize them! If only our own souls, dear brethren, more adequately realized them, that our songs of gratitude to God, and our lives of gratitude, might more fittingly give glory to God in the highest. Let us meditate upon the wonderful things narrated in our text, that the precious truth unto salvation may be better appreciated and our lives may better show forth the Redeemer's praise. Our text announces that

THE SAVIOR IS BORN.

Let us dwell on 1. *The marvelous fact*, 2. *The glorious announcement*, and 3. *The angelic praise*. May the Holy Spirit give us light and life and love, that our Christmas joy may be full.

I. The Christmas story stands unparalleled in the history of the world, full as this is of marvelous events. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." That is the wonderful fact to which prophets looked forward as the consolation of Israel, and on which the saints of all time based their hopes of eventual deliverance from all the evils that afflict our race. It was so plainly foretold in the Scriptures that the people of God in the olden time waited for it with eager expectation and ardent desire, and the

redeemed of the Lord find in it now their peace and joy and glory.

1. How God shaped all the events of time to work out His purposes in the great fact of the incarnation, our text furnishes an example. "It came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria." At first sight this seems to have nothing to do with the Christmas tidings. It might even appear irrelevant. But we read further, and soon find that it is intimately connected with the fact of our joyous festival. "And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judæa, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was that while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered." The account of this taxing is important not only to fix the date of our Savior's birth. It shows the working of divine providence in the accomplishment of divine ends. Without knowing it, the lordly Augustus must contribute to the fulfilment of the prophecies concerning the lowly Jesus. It had been written in Micah, seven hundred years before, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be the Ruler in Israel, whose going forth has been from of old, from everlasting." Mic. 5, 2. It was in harmony with all the rest of the circumstances connected with the wonderful fact that a place comparatively insignificant should be chosen as the scene of the birth. There He who was begotten of the Father from eternity should be born of a woman in the fulness of time. So it must come to pass in order to identify the child as the

promised Ruler in Israel. And the proud emperor, heathen as he was, must be an instrument in the hands of God to execute the design. Joseph and Mary dwelt at Nazareth, far away from the place where Christ was to be born. The time was now near when Mary should be delivered. All human probabilities pointed to Nazareth as the place where her child should be born. But the decree of Cæsar Augustus went out, and in consequence Mary was in Bethlehem when the birth took place, and all occurred as the prophets had foretold. "This cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." Is. 28, 29. He has all things at His command, and rules over all, working out His plans in ways that human minds cannot comprehend. "Great is our Lord, and of great power; His understanding is infinite." Ps. 147, 5. Prophecy announced that the Holy Child should be born in Bethlehem, and Cæsar Augustus must under God's providence render service in accomplishing its fulfilment.

2. "And she brought forth her first-born Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." That too is marvelous. Could not the mighty Monarch of the universe make better provision for the reception of His only Son when He should be born into the world? Are not all things under His government, and if men in their perverseness would not prepare a fitting place for Him, could He not have sent a legion of angels to give Him a royal reception and prepare Him a royal abode? It seems so incongruous that the Babe who was the Son of the Highest, indeed God over all, should be wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger, because there was no room for Him in the inn. Could not God furnish a better place for His Son to be cradled, and if the inn had no room, could He not make room? Could not His

almighty power create a palace and furnish a princely chamber instead of a manger, in which the Son of the Highest might be laid? O brethren, these are human thoughts, and not the thoughts of Him whose understanding is infinite. He had thoughts of peace toward us, and to execute them it was needful that the only Begotten of the Father should appear in lowliness to redeem mankind. Do not forget the purpose for which He came into this world. He was "made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." Gal. 4, 4. 5. To do this He must take the place of humanity, rendered wretched by sin, and subject Himself to all the consequences of human transgression. God could have furnished His Son with more than royal entertainment on earth, and could have rendered His life a triumphal march of glory through His dominions. But then we would not be rejoicing to-day according to the joy of Christmas. We would then have no Savior and no hope and no peace and no heaven to gladden our hearts. If the Holy Child Jesus had not submitted to the humiliation which was His lot on earth for our salvation, there would be no exaltation for us and no inheritance in our Father's house. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Phil. 2, 5–8. He must submit to deeper humiliation yet than that of being excluded from the inn which had no room for Him and of being laid in a manger. He must be a man of sorrows all His life and suffer an ignominious death to atone for our sins. To this end did He come, and therefore His birth was so lowly and His life so sad and His death so shameful. He

submitted to all willingly because He loved us so and desired to save us from utter ruin and endless misery; and we celebrate our joyous festival of Christmas because He was willing to submit to all that was necessary to save us.

3. But the child was glorious for all that, although His condescension was marvelous. He was the Son of God as well as the Son of the Virgin Mary. The Babe for whom there was no room in the inn and who was laid in the manger was God over all, blessed for ever. His majesty did not appear in all that poverty and lowliness, but He was the Lord of glory still. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," says St. John. "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." John 1, 1. 14. The humble child that was born of the Virgin and laid in the manger was the Maker of all. "The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." John 1, 2. 3. That Divinity did not cease to exist when the Divine Person was born into the world as a human child. He was God then as He had been before and shall for ever be. He only assumed our human nature in addition to the divine nature which he had from eternity, so that He who was God before the conception and birth was now God and man in one undivided person. It was the King of Glory, made flesh for our salvation, for whom no room was found in the inn and who was cradled in the manger. And even in His human nature the Holy Child was glorious. For all power was given unto Him in heaven and on earth. The human nature assumed by the Divine Person in the womb of the Virgin was made to share the divine power and the divine glory of the Word that assumed it. "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness; God was man-

ifest in the flesh." 1 Tim. 3, 16. All the surroundings seemed so insignificant, and among men it excited so little attention, but it was a marvelous birth, at which the heavens were stirred and at which the world rejoices to-day. For what the prophet Isaiah declared has been fulfilled: "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulders; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." Isai. 9, 6. The Babe of Bethlehem is our Lord and our God, who for our salvation has become our Brother.

II. If, when He came in lowliness, He was despised and rejected of men, His birth did not remain unannounced and unsung. It was duly proclaimed, and some were found to heed the gracious proclamation. Hear again what our text says of the glorious announcement. "And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."

1. This shows us who was the first preacher of the everlasting gospel. It was meet that a fact of such infinite moment should be announced by a heavenly messenger. It took place in mercy to man, for the good of man, but man was not able to realize it and not worthy to proclaim it. Indeed, who among men should make known the glorious event that was hidden under forms so unimposing? There were large numbers of people in Bethlehem, come thither on the same registering mission that led Joseph and Mary to

that favored town, but what cared they for the poor travelers that were crowded out of the inn and for the poor Babe that was laid in the manger? It was necessary, under the circumstances, that some other than a human messenger should proclaim the good tidings of the Savior's birth, and it was fitting that a fact so marvelous and so glorious should be announced to man by a bright herald from the imperial court of Heaven. The angel of the Lord came upon a little flock, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, while the marvelous message was delivered. Subsequently men whose hearts were touched and whose tongues were loosed by the heavenly truth should tell the wondrous story in all the world, as we by the grace of God are permitted to tell it again to-day; but when the good news of salvation was first published, it was in accord with the nature of the event that a shining one from heaven above should appear in a blaze of glory to publish it. The lowly birth must at least have a glorious announcement to win the favor of a race that has no predilection for things lowly.

2. But the radiant preacher of the glorious tidings did not appear among the great and honored of the earth to make known what great things God had done for His unworthy creatures. There were simple shepherds keeping watch over their flocks that holy night as usual, and they knew not what a mystery of godliness had taken place in the village hard by. There were no shouts of welcome to the new-born King, and no signals to tell that an extraordinary event had occurred. But the heavenly preacher came in glory to this humble congregation and published the joyful news. To the poor the gospel is preached: it was so in the beginning; it is so now. "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to con-

found the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence." 1 Cor. 1, 26–29. The poor shepherds were sore afraid when they saw the heavenly messenger and the glory which shone around them. The apparition was so extraordinary that, in the consciousness of sin and unworthiness, fears were started in their souls as to the things that were coming. But their fears were soon dispelled, and they were accounted worthy, in the boundless mercy of God, to hear the first announcement of the Savior's birth.

3. And the message which the heavenly visitant delivered has been the burden of men's Christmas sermons and Christmas songs ever since that glorious announcement in the fields of Bethlehem. "The angel said unto them, Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." There was no reason to fear when the proclamation of pardon and peace was made to a sinful world. The Lord from heaven came to his earthly dominions, but it was not to condemn, as the rebellious subjects deserved to be condemned, but to save them from the condemnation that was their due. Like the shepherds, we are prone to be sore afraid when a message from heaven comes to us. We know that if justice overtakes us it shall be ill with us, and we cannot tell at what hour the announcement will be made that the time of God's long-suffering is at an end and the time of reckoning has come. But hear the merciful message, and do not fear. The Lord has come, but He has come not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. They are good tidings that

are brought, not the evil tidings which a guilty conscience fears; they are tidings of joy, not of the grief which the announcement of judgment on our sin would bring. And these good tidings of great joy shall be unto all people. No one has any ground for thinking that mercy and peace and joy are only for better and holier people than he. It is a proclamation made to sinners, not to the righteous. "There is none righteous, no, not one." And it embraces all sinners. If there were one exception, then you or I might think himself that one. But there is not one excepted. It is to all people. O, all ye people, it is to you all! O, all ye people, praise the Lord! O, all ye people, tell it to all around that all the earth may share our Christmas joy and give glory to God in the highest, as there is now peace on earth and good will to men. "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." The Deliverer from sin and death and endless misery has come. He lies lowly in the manger, and His glorious majesty and power are not apparent to the eye of sense. The multitude recognizes Him not and adores Him not as the King of glory that He is. But the angel proclaims Him to be the promised Messiah, the hope and consolation of Israel—to be the Lord of all, in whose name every knee shall bow—to be the Savior, who shall save His people from their sins and bring them to the celestial mansions in our Father's house. Glorious things are spoken of this holy Child Jesus, this lowly Babe of Bethlehem, whose birth we celebrate with gladness now. The ransomed of the Lord come now to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads, for the Savior has come and sorrow and sighing flee away. Behold in Him, my beloved, all that your souls need. He that believeth in Him shall not perish, shall have everlasting life. O, receive this Savior as your Savior, and give Him the

glory which is due unto His name. Join in the angels' song, and praise Him all ye people.

III. Hear the angelic praise. When the heavenly messenger had made his announcement to the shepherds, "suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." The miracle of grace that seemed so insignificant to the darkened minds of men was too great and glorious to be left unsung, and the choir of angels made the welkin ring with their jubilant anthems of glory to God.

1. It was a scene that presented a strong contrast to that in the stable at Bethlehem. Here lay a child in swaddling clothes with none to honor it but the poor mother and her betrothed husband; there the angel from heaven proclaimed the advent of the promised Savior in this lowly Child, and the proclamation, about which the world, whom it concerned so much, cared so little, was greeted with shouts of joy by the bright ministers of God that always behold His face in heaven. The humble shepherds were afraid when the one bright visitant from the realms of glory appeared to them: what must have been their amazement when the whole angelic choir with rapturous songs resounded the praises of their God, who had visited His fallen people for their redemption! True, they were somewhat prepared for the angels' song by the glorious announcement that the Savior had come. No doubt it seemed to them in accord with the wonderful apparition of the angel and his wonderful tidings that all the angels should sing and all the heavens should ring. And yet it was a stupendous scene of glory that was displayed before their eyes when suddenly the whole angelic host appeared in the air, and the whole chorus of heaven broke out in rapturous songs of praise to God at the wonderful birth. But it was meet that it should be so. He

is worthy to receive honor and glory and blessing, and if mortals for whom the Savior was born will not sing, the angels who know their Lord must give Him praise.

2. And what is their song? Why, "Glory to God in the highest!" The grace is all for man, the benefits are all ours, but the glory belongs to God alone. He devised the marvelous plan by which our souls should be saved from the death into which sin had plunged them; He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law: to Him belongs the praise for ever. By the mercy of our God the Dayspring from on high hath visited us and brought peace on earth through His good will to men. In this holy Child Jesus God is reconciled and the guilty soul finds peace in believing. We have deserved indignation and wrath by our sin; but through Him that wrath is turned away and God's good will is secured for our salvation from the curse that sin has brought upon us. Therefore there is peace on earth. The barrier between God and man is taken away; the condemnation that was upon us is removed; the soul that believes in Jesus has peace. Unto us a Savior is born, and our hearts can find rest in Him, because there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. And all this blessedness is the gift of divine grace. Not because there was any worthiness in man did God send His dear Son, but only because He loved us so; not because we deserved it did the Son of God condescend to become man and take our place in poverty, and suffering, and death, but because His love is boundless and His grace is infinite; not because there is any merit in us, but because He still loves us and would secure the eternal purpose of God's love, does the Holy Spirit come to-day and every day to draw us to Jesus and teach us to own our Savior

and sing His praises. Glory belongs to God in the highest, and saints on earth and in heaven, together with the holy angels, for ever sing, Glory to God in the highest.

3. To-day let us learn that song and join that angelic chorus. That is the true joy of Christmas and that is its worthy celebration. Let the households rejoice in the gifts and cheer of Christmas; let the children enjoy their books and sweetmeats, and blow their trumpets and beat their drums; let the Christmas tree make happy the family circle with its brightness and its beauty; but it is all vanity without the great Christmas gift of God to man that gives the festal charm and joy to all the celebration. A Christmas without Christ in the heart—that is an empty thing. A Christmas without the song of praise to Him whose goodness gladdens all, and whose greatest display of goodness is in the gift of His own dear Son—that is a hollow thing. Do you not hear the angels sing, "Glory to God in the highest," and know ye not that this is because unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord? And will you not join that song, and gather your children around the Christmas tree in church and at home and teach them that song? O, do not say that you cannot sing. Why not? If the voice has unhappily never learned to chime with others in resounding the Savior's praise, the heart can at least rejoice in the Savior born and the salvation sent, and the heart can sing if the voice cannot keep pace. Christian bosoms bound lightly to-day and are full of joy: therefore throughout the churches the praises of God are ringing, and in thousands of families the strains are prolonged, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." O, ye that believe that Jesus is truly your Savior, join the song and magnify the praises of Him who hath visited and redeemed His people. Let the

Christmas anthem ring throughout the earth and magnify the Savior's glorious name.

O brethren, those are wondrous tidings which our Gospel for this joyous festival brings us. They are to all people, and therefore also to us. And all the gladness around us shows that they have not been proclaimed to the world in vain, though much of the hilarity that greets our eyes and ears has another source than that which produces true Christmas joy. Let us all embrace anew the Christ-Child as He comes to us in His Word to-day with good will from heaven and with peace to sinful men. He comes to bless us with forgiveness of sin and life and salvation: believe in His blessed name and be of good cheer. Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say rejoice. Christmas has come with its message of mercy and joy: why should not Christian hearts be glad? "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with singing." Ps. 100, 1. 2. For we helpless creatures have been helped; we lost sinners have been redeemed. The Savior has come, hallelujah; He is our Savior, hallelujah. O, let us join the angels' song to welcome our Lord and Savior, and in our lives and with our voices sing, Glory to God in the highest: to us a Savior is born. Hallelujah. Amen.

Sunday after Christmas.

LUKE 2, 33–40.

And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary His mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also;) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and she was a widow of about four score and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.

Dear Brethren:

The Holy Child Jesus, on whose birth we meditated at the joyous Christmas festival, was made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law. All that the ordinance of God required of Him and respecting Him was scrupulously complied with. Therefore when the days of Mary's purification according to the Mosaic law were accomplished, "they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord." There the aged Simeon, like many other pious people of God, was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and when they brought the Child to the temple, Simeon blessed God that he was permitted to see his Savior and Israel's glory. But while he welcomed his Redeemer and glorified his God for the salvation sent and the great consolation bestowed, as did also the prophetess

Anna, he was chosen of God to declare some truths which are important for all time. This blessed Savior would be rejected by many. Not all should have the salvation which was designed for all, and those who did receive Him should pass through tribulation into the kingdom of God. It is made plain to us that

JESUS IS SET FOR THE FALL AND RISING OF MANY.

I. *The Holy Child Jesus is set for the fall of many in Israel.* This is the first point presented in our text for consideration. But what can the Holy Spirit, speaking by the mouth of Simeon, mean, when He says that Christ shall be a rock against which many shall dash to their own destruction, as well as a rock on which many shall find refuge against the beating storm? Are not men fallen already? And can it be the design of the Christ Child, whose birth has been celebrated with such rejoicings on every hand, to deepen the damnation in which men lie groaning? Not so, dear brethren. But none can pass this Rock, set in the midst of the stream of history, without having their destiny affected by it. And some will be dashed to pieces when they strike against it.

1. The *fact* is beyond controversy. So it was foretold before the Word was made flesh and dwelt in lowliness among us. "Sanctify the Lord of hosts Himself," says the prophet Isaiah, "and let Him be your fear and let Him be your dread. And He shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, and for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble and fall and be broken and be snared and be taken." Is. 8, 13–15. That stone

was elect, precious; but many stumbled at it and fell. The blessed Child, so dear to us and so full of joy to us in the present forgiveness of sins and of hope in the future possession of eternal happiness, was a sign spoken against even during His visible sojourn on earth, and ever since. "Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself," says the Holy Spirit, "lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." Heb. 12, 3. Even in His infancy the opposition to Him was fierce, breathing death and destruction. When but a child He was persecuted by Herod, the unrelenting foe, who, in order to destroy his life, "sent forth and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under." Matt. 2, 16. And that hostility never ceased until it nailed our Lord to the accursed tree. The blessed Savior was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,—calumniated, persecuted, beaten, spit upon, crucified. What Simeon declared was realized in our Lord's life in fullest measure, so that the sword of His sufferings pierced through His mother's soul also. And so it has been ever since. The foes of our Savior have been breathing vengeance and slaughter all through the ages against the Lord and His Church. The story of the bloody persecutions of His people belongs to the most terrible records of human heartlessness and crime. Millions have risen up against the Christ of God, have dashed against Him, and have been broken to pieces. The fact stands out plainly in all history, that He is a sign spoken against, and that He was set for the fall of many.

2. The *explanation* of the undeniable fact is not difficult to find. Only when men refuse to compare Scripture with Scripture and to read the mind of the Spirit in the complete revelation of the one truth unto salvation, could they fall upon the cheerless and forbidding thought, that the God of love created some men to an inevitable doom

of death and endless misery, and that Christ was sent to be the cause of their destruction, as He was sent to be the cause of life and salvation to others more favored of God. There is nothing clearer in the Bible than that God, who so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son to save it, desires the damnation of none, desires the salvation of all. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." Ez. 33, 11. Therefore He gave His only Son to be a Savior for the entire human race. "For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." 1 Tim. 2, 5. 6. Hence also the tidings were ordered to be published to all people, because Christ the Lord came to bring all to glory. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature," is the divine commission. Mark 16, 15. In the design of God the Lord Jesus came to save all men from the curse which was upon them all on account of sin. We are expressly told that the condemnation of sinners was not the object of Christ's coming. "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." John 3, 17. It impeaches the mercy of God and brings dishonor upon His holy name, and it deprives human hearts of the comfort of Holy Scripture and drives them to despair, when the harsh and cruel doctrine is taught, that God is the cause, which means that God is the fault, that so many stumble at Christ and fall. Such a thought be far from us, brethren, because it is an unscriptural and ungodly thought. That would be an explanation that darkens the whole Gospel. But Christ is ours only by faith, and because many do not believe in Him and thus refuse the salvation which He brings, they perish. That is the true explanation, which the Holy Ghost Himself has given.

For it is written: "Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling-stone; as it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling-stone and rock of offence, and whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed." Rom. 9, 31–33. The Son of God came into the world to bring salvation to all men. That salvation is not to be forced upon any soul. The grace which secured the redemption and offers it to souls by the Word and Sacraments also renders them able to receive it, without rendering them unable to reject it. Men have the dreadful power of resisting the grace of God which bringeth salvation. That they will not come and be saved when the Lord calls them and offers salvation, that is the reason why Christ is set for their fall. The only help that is possible they put from them, and rejecting their only hope they must perish. Hence our Lord exclaims: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." Matt. 23, 37. That is the explanation of the lamentable fact. Men reject the Savior and die.

3. A *lesson* of the greatest import is thus urged upon our consciences. The truth presented is a warning and a comfort. So many stumble at this precious stone that is laid in Zion, and the danger besets us also: let us watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation. The person and life of our Lord was not, in its external appearance, such as to win the admiration of proud reason. There was no glory manifest ordinarily in the lowly Savior who, though He was in the form of God, made no display of His divine powers, but took upon Him the form of a ser-

vant, so that there was nothing to attract the attention of those who delight in splendor and magnificence. Nor was there anything in His life of self-denial and suffering that would win such hearts; for, being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. That offends and repels, rather than attracts and wins sinful human nature with its lust of the eyes and pride of life. Nor is this offence of the cross removed by the doctrine of our Lord. On the contrary, this rather enhances it. The carnal mind is insulted when it is not merely insinuated that man is powerless for good and hopelessly and helplessly disabled, but when it is directly stated and repeated in various forms, that all are by nature children of wrath and doomed to destruction, and that there is salvation in no other than Christ, for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. Are we then, with all our high endowments and all our dominion over nature, of no worth and significance at all? Are we to be degraded to the mere clay, which the potter moulds to suit his purpose? Are we to be mere beggars, living upon the bounty of another and highly favored that we are permitted to live at all? Men are offended when they are told that they are miserable sinners who can be saved only by grace, and that the glory of the sinner's salvation is due only to the Lord Jesus, not to themselves. And this offence is increased by the other doctrines which are set forth in the Scriptures and which men are expected to believe, and by the life which is required of the Lord's disciples. Everything is so humiliating to our reason, which naturally has a fond conceit of itself, and so mortifying to our feelings, with their cravings for pleasure. The Gospel casts down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, bringing into cap-

tivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; and so far as this world is concerned it offers no external compensations, assuring us rather that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. The disciples suffer with their Master: as He is a sign spoken against, so they are a people against whom the devil and the world are ever directing their assaults. It is well for us that we know these things, that we may be forewarned. Let us be on the alert, that the foe may not cause us to stumble. We know what to expect as followers of the Savior. Blessed are they who shall not be offended in Him! That is our comfort: the Lord is with us and gives us His peace and renders us forever blessed. The gates of hell rage against us, but they shall not prevail. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's pleasure to give you the kingdom. The Christ Child is set for the fall of many, who stumble at His person and His doctrine. But He is not a rock upon which all must split. He came not to condemn, but to save. This brings us to our second division.

II. *The Holy Child Jesus is set for the Rising of many in Israel.* We shall show who they are that enjoy this rising and to what they are led.

1. In the first place, who are those persons for whose rising the Savior is set? Our text shows that they were those who came to the temple of the Lord, and who were engaged in fasting and prayer, and who looked for redemption in Jerusalem; in other words, they were those who, in the first place, came where the light shined and help was to be found; who, in the second place, felt their need of help and penitently came to God; and who, in the third place, believed in Christ as the Redeemer of the world.

First, if men would share in the redemption which is in Christ Jesus they must come to the temple where the

means of grace are dispensed. Simeon "came by the Spirit into the temple," where he blessed the Child with Joseph and Mary; and Anna the prophetess, who also gave thanks to the Lord for the salvation sent, "departed not from the temple." There they met the Holy Child and rejoiced in the good tidings of the Savior's advent. And so it has been and will continue to be. The Lord is in His holy temple. There the Word is preached and there the Sacraments are administered. Thither we are to go, therefore, to share the blessing which is in Christ for all men. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Rom. 10, 17. The Gospel is indeed the power of God unto salvation, in whatever form it may come to us. It is such power when we read it as well as when we hear it. But God has ordained that it shall be preached, and there is but little reason to expect that people who will not come to hear will notwithstanding diligently read. It is easier to get men to sit and hear than to get them to fix their eyes upon the book and ponder, and it is easier to understand the Word when presented by a preacher than when laid before us in print. When Philip asked the eunuch who was reading in Isaiah whether he understood what he read, the reply was, "How can I except some man should guide me?" Acts 8, 31. There is a great advantage in having the truth explained and enforced by the living minister of God. And the sacraments are committed to the Church. Those who despise that divine institution ordinarily cut themselves off from the benefits of Baptism and the Holy Supper. Christ saves us in the Church; let us therefore not neglect the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but come to the temple where Christ is to be found, and bring others to the temple also, that they too may hear and believe and be saved.

Secondly, those who enter the temple must hear the

Word and be brought to a knowledge of their sins, that they may thus be prepared to hear of a Savior from sin and from the death which it brings. Only those are raised from their ruin who see their lost estate and are willing to accept help. Like Simeon and Anna they wait for the consolation of Israel and serve God with fastings and prayers night and day. The grace of God has enabled them to recognize their damnableness and helplessness and to turn to God for help. No one can embrace the salvation in Christ unless he has become deeply and painfully aware that he is condemned because of his iniquities and has no refuge save in the divine mercy. To such Christ is set for the rising; for "the Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." Ps. 34, 18.

Thirdly, these are brought to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and thus lay hold of the hope set before them and are saved. Simeon blessed the Lord, for his eyes had seen the great salvation in Christ, and Anna "gave thanks likewise unto the Lord and spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem." It was the eternal plan of God that salvation should be by faith in the only begotten Son, made of a woman to redeem them that were under the law. In the old and in the new dispensation alike there was and is salvation in no other than the one blessed name of Jesus. For "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3, 16. Without faith it is impossible to be saved. There is but one Redeemer, and but one way to enjoy the benefit of the redemption. If Christ had not come and died for us, we must all perish; if men believe not, now that He has come and atoned for our sins, they must perish still. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned."

Mark 16, 16. Hence those who believe are the chosen people for whose rising Christ is set.

2. And those who are raised up by the grace of God in Christ are not only heirs of eternal glory in heaven, but they are engaged in the service of God on earth.

First, as Simeon and Anna blessed God and gave thanks unto the Lord, so the assembly of saints that is raised by the Redeemer to sonship with God and the eternal inheritance are moved by the consciousness of their rich possessions to sing untiring praises to their God and Savior. There can be no appreciation of the divine blessing of deliverance from eternal death when there is no gratitude for the bounty. Those who realize the blessing bestowed break out in thanks to God for His unspeakable gift. The saints of old entered into the house of the Lord with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise. They delighted to sing unto the Lord, because from the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh. So the church still delights to raise psalms and hymns and songs of praise. Knowing the mercy of the Lord and the great salvation freely bestowed in the Lamb of God, how should she not crowd His gates with thankful songs! "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits." Ps. 103, 1. 2. O brethren, how could you, knowing and believing the love which God hath toward you and hath shown in your salvation, how could you refuse to give to Him the praise which is due?

Secondly, those who have appropriated the righteousness of Christ by faith and thus enjoy the benefit of Christ's coming, not only thank and praise God for the blessings which they possess, but they also continue instant in prayer, knowing that every good and perfect gift cometh down from above, from the Father of lights, and that we are dependent for every blessing on His bounty.

He that will not pray has no such sense of want and helplessness as belongs to the true children of God, who know that they are saved by grace, and who recognize their dependence upon that grace for their continuance in faith unto salvation as well as for its first bestowal. How could you fail to cry unto God for help, if you knew how incapable you are of helping yourselves and believed how ready God is to grant it? How could you put your trust in God if you asked Him for no gift? When men feel their want and have confidence in God to supply it, they will pray without ceasing. The neglect of prayer is therefore not only the reason of so much poverty, men having nothing because they ask nothing, but also a symptom of declining spiritual life, if not of death. The faith which embraces Christ and the salvation which is in Him, also heeds the commandments of God and appropriates the promises; hence the sincere believer, like Anna, serves God with fastings and prayers, as God has in various places commanded, and realizes the promise so frequently repeated for our encouragement: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." Matt. 7, 7. 8. Therefore, brethren, "be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Phil. 4, 6.

Finally, there is a duty towards others which must not be overlooked or treated lightly. They that believe in Christ will remember their brethren in their thanksgivings and in their prayers; but they are conscious also of a calling which requires them to be bearers of blessings to their fellow-men. They will speak of Christ, as did Simeon and Anna, confessing His name before men and bearing witness to the great salvation which is found alone

in Him. The heart is not right when the question is asked, as it so often is by way of reply to missionary appeals, what have we to do with other people? Have we not enough to do to provide for our own wants? The heart is not right when such questions are thus propounded, because they show a lack of faith and a want of charity. For faith is a power within the soul that presses it to the utterance of the truth believed, and charity is a power that looks at our neighbor's need and gives us no rest until we have done our utmost to supply it. The Lord Jesus has come into this world to save others as well as us; He paid the same great price for the ransom of our neighbor, that He paid for us; He would have them as well as us share the blessing; and His desire is that you and I, who have now been brought to know His love and His salvation, should be bearers of the good tidings to others. To this the Spirit moves all true believers. Hence Anna spoke of Christ to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. Hence the Church has always been a body of confessing people, proclaiming to others the unsearchable riches of Christ, and blessing others while they are blessed.

Dear brethren, there are still multitudes who are not saved, though Christ has come to be their Savior. To you is this grace given that you know Him; will you not, for the sake of the great love wherewith He loved you, be more zealous henceforth in the work of the Church, that your service may redound to the glory of your Savior and to the salvation of many who are yet in the shadow of death? That is the way to manifest gratitude for the great blessing which you enjoy; that is the way to praise His name who gives you the blessing; that is the way to bring the blessing also to others, for whom God designed it as well as for you. And that you may have your zeal renewed and increased daily, let the Savior, who is set for

the fall and the rising again of many in Israel, be your daily meditation and admiration and delight. The wonders that meet in His person and are manifest in His work become greater as your contemplation of them continues. Joseph and His mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of Him. And the Child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him. Do not ye marvel also as ye read these things? He is God over all, and yet He is a human child, and grows in stature and in wisdom like other children. We marvel, but we know the import of the mystery. He is the Son of God who has become man and takes our place that He might deliver us from death. The grace of God was upon Him that it might be upon us. Bless the Lord, O my soul. Amen.

New Year's Day.

LUKE 2, 21.

And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, His name was called Jesus, which was so named of the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

Beloved in Christ:

The first day of another year has dawned upon us, and the mercy of the Lord calls upon us to devote ourselves anew to Him. The joys of another year have fled—the sorrows of another year are past. Some of those who on last New Year worshipped with us here, have been called away and are now, we trust, worshiping in heaven. We are spared, not that we may live unto ourselves, or in base servitude to sin and Satan, but that we may enjoy the liberty of God's children and be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. It is therefore proper that we should form our resolutions to serve God anew, and do this in no trust in our own sufficiency, but in the faith of God's power and grace. We have Satan and the world and the flesh to contend with this year also: let us fight the good fight of faith vigilantly, valiantly, so that if any of us should be called away in the year commenced today, as very probably some of us will, we may be sure of the crown of righteousness which is laid up for all them that remain faithful unto death. And this determination to be the Lord's and serve Him only, will sweeten the crosses which we may have to bear in the year before us, and will not diminish, but heighten, the joys which it may

please God to give us in this vale of tears for our encouragement in the journey to that land where we shall come "with songs and everlasting joy upon our heads." But this joy is dependent upon our steadfastness in the faith: not upon our firmness in holding fast the conclusions of our reason and our reasonable opinions, but upon our fidelity in holding fast the promises of God's Word, that we may have peace in believing and attain unto the end of our faith, which is the salvation of our souls. This we must do whether the world frown upon us or smile, in spite of jeers and scoffs directed against us by those who pretend to more light than the Lord's Word can give. For we must not overlook the fact that our faith must be tried, and that the probation is sometimes applied where many least expect it. Such probation is presented in our text to-day: not only in its requirement that we should believingly own the Babe of Bethlehem to be our Savior, but also in the presentation of circumcision as a divine ordinance, to which Jesus must subject Himself as our Substitute. Let us then consider

THE SACRAMENT OF CIRCUMCISION.

And may the Lord bless our meditation, that we may understand His ways better and become stronger for His service. I desire to speak of the circumcision of the old and of the new dispensation; in other words 1. *Of Circumcision* in the strict sense, as the rite ordained for the Jews, and 2. *Of Baptism*, which St. Paul calls the circumcision made without hands.

I. With regard to Circumcision there are four points which I would have you consider, several of them referring to the ordinance in general, several of them to its application in the case of our Savior.

1. *Circumcision was a divine ordinance.* It was not a regulation of the Church, which could be dispensed with whenever it should be deemed expedient. It was God's seal to a divine covenant. It was, on man's part, the entrance into that covenant with God. For it is related in Gen. 17 that God appeared to Abram and said: "I am the Almighty God: walk before me and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee. . . . And this is my covenant which ye shall keep between me and you and thy seed after thee; every man-child among you shall be circumcised." It was stipulated here that God should multiply Abraham's seed exceedingly, that He should give him and his seed Canaan for a possession, and that He should be their God forever; and, on the other hand, that man should walk before God and be perfect, and that he should be circumcised. Circumcision was thus necessary to stand in covenant relations with God: the great blessings promised to His people were promised to those who had entered into the covenant by circumcision. The command to circumcise was therefore very explicit. "He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money must needs be circumcised," v. 13. And not only are all required to receive this covenant, but the penalty is announced which they will be required to pay who neglect or reject it. "The uncircumcised man-child, whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant," v. 14. It is thus very clear that without circumcision it was impossible to stand in covenant relation with God—that this ordinance was the necessary condition, on man's part, under which, ordinarily, the promised blessings were to be inherited. And on this account it was an ordinance not only for adults, as the blessings were not exclusively for them, but also and especially for infants. There is mercy in heaven for babes always: and not only

mercy, but mercy covenanted, pledged to them. It is heartless to deny them a share in God's gracious promises, as it is blindness to deny their participation in human sin. The covenant, which continues until this day, and will continue to the end of the world, suffers little children to enter, and forbids them not. Nay, it positively commands their admission. "He that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you," v. 12. Manifestly circumcision was a divine ordinance to be applied to all in whose case it was possible, i. e. to all males, and it was the condition of the covenant relation between God and man.

2. *Circumcision was a trial of the people's faith.* It was a probation, because there seemed to be no reason for it in nature, the only ground for its observance being the Word of God commanding it. That man was to be blessed just in this way was simply owing to the divine will. God commanded circumcision. Surely this is ground enough: surely this is the only ground a man should ask. And yet there are thousands who reject that which has no other ground; and our faith is proved every time we are asked to believe or do a thing upon this ground only, more especially if there seem to be rational grounds militating against it. And this is the case in regard to circumcision. There are reasons against it which, although to a Christian's mind they may seem both profane and ridiculous, yet seem strong to the carnal mind, and hence to many a man who is guided by his carnal mind. What use is there in cutting off a small portion of the flesh? it may be said. What good can this do the soul? Is it not absurd to suppose that God would condition the bestowal of his blessing upon an act so vain and so trivial? Is it not a childish thing, this circumcising the foreskin of the flesh? Besides, look at the inexpediency of circumcision. It is very painful, and it may even endanger life to inflict such a wound in such a place: is it reasonable to suppose that God

would require us to bear the pain and incur such danger? Then it subjects us to the scoffs of them that are without; will not they laugh at the pain which is so uselessly inflicted, and pronounce it shameful to make an incision in such a member? These and similar reasons against it may seem very plausible: to those who sit in darkness they may even seem convincing. And even to Christians, who are not vigilant as they ought to be, they may seem very strong, though they are as weak as water. If we watch and be sober, we shall readily find a reply to all such reasoning. For to any child of God this must be an all-sufficient answer: God hath so ordained it, and it becomes not man to quarrel with God. Just as soon as we presume to criticise God's ordinances we are denying God and becoming idolaters; for we place ourselves above Him when we set ourselves up as judges over Him and His words and works, and many thus actually deify themselves. Brethren, we are giving way to the devil whenever we even entertain the question whether what God appoints can be so or can be right: a believer must be certain of the fact, though he may not understand how or why it is.

Do you remember how Eve's ruin, and ours with her, was brought about? Why, she too must undergo a probation. In Paradise, where all was beauty and liberty and joy, there was one tree of which it was forbidden to eat. What use was there in this prohibition? This was the tempting question suggested by the devil in the words: "Yea, hath God said ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" As though he would say: Think of the matter once: is it possible that God could have forbidden you to eat of that tree? You have no doubt misunderstood the words: they cannot mean what they say. Doubts having thus been awakened, the way was prepared for a lie, by which the Lord's words were contradicted: "The

serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die." So it is always. The devil induces men to reason upon that which they ought at once to believe as God's infallible word, and having seduced them into doubt by reasoning, it is easy to reason them into unbelief. Therefore think it no slight matter when you are tried as to God's ordinances: your salvation depends upon your clinging to the word "in spite of man, in erring reason's spite," as the children of God in the Old Testament clung to circumcision in spite of men and their mockery.

But circumcision being thus the means of admission into covenant relation with God, and a probation of faith, why must Jesus be circumcised?

3. *By circumcision Jesus was made under the law as our representative*—as the one who was to take our place. Circumcision was required by the law, and Jesus was to fulfill all righteousness. Not, of course, because He had any sin of His own must He subject Himself to the law both in action and passion; but because He came to save us, upon whom the law made its demands and on whom it laid the penalties of transgressing it. He was "made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." He could not be our substitute and render full satisfaction for us, without putting Himself entirely in our place. God made Him, who knew no sin, to become sin for us. And His great mercy to us fallen men is manifest not only in this, that He condescended to be born of a woman as man, but that He also, from the very beginning, subjected Himself to every requirement of the law to which man was bound. The painful rite of circumcision was performed upon Him also on the eighth day, according to the divine Word, and He was thus obedient to the law in the beginning of His earthly course, as He was obedient even unto death. How much should man be ashamed to find fault with God's ordinances, which are

for our good, when our Savior fulfilled them for us without a murmur, though His was the pain and ours the profit, and this when we were yet ungodly! Of this we are assured by

4. *The Name which our Lord received at His circumcision.* It was customary when children were circumcised, as it is now when they are baptized, to confer upon them a name. Our Lord was also named the eighth day, and His name was called Jesus. This was in accordance with the command of the angel, given before the conception. It was God's will that He should be the Savior, and He was therefore called so; the word Jesus means Savior. God's names are facts: what He calls a person, that the person is. So Jesus was and is the Redeemer. When we give names to persons we do it according to our fancy, or, in the best case, with the hope that the child may, when it grows up, not belie its name. But Jesus was what He was called. He was so already in the constitution of His Person. God and man were here—and are now—mysteriously united in this one Jesus, so that He had every qualification for saving people from their sins. He was God and could atone for all; He was man and stood under the law, under which we were, and was thus enabled to bear its penalties and fulfill its requirements. And this the blessed God-Man was pleased to do: establishing the truth of His name in fact as He was constituted to do it in His wonderful Person.

And in this name we are called to rejoice—and in this name to live, and labor, and suffer, and conquer! Let us this New Year, in this name, not in our own, go forth, remembering for our encouragement that we have a Jesus, a Savior; and a better motto we cannot have upon our banner as we go forth, than that of the apostle, Col. 3, 17: "Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name

of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him."

But this we cannot do of ourselves: it is the grace of God. Of this grace we become recipients by the appointed means, one of which is Holy Baptism, which takes the place of circumcision in the New Testament, and by which we are brought into covenant relation with God now and are made heirs of the promise given to Abraham, as in the Old Testament men were by circumcision. We are therefore to speak also of this circumcision of the New Testament, namely

II. Holy Baptism.—Respecting this also there are four points to which our attention is directed.

1. *Baptism has come in the place of circumcision.* That circumcision is abolished no one in Christendom calls in question. "In Christ Jesus," St. Paul says, Gal. 6, 15, "neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." That it did avail something before the coming of Christ, is plain from what we have already said: it avails nothing now, because it is abolished. But just as plain as it is that circumcision has been done away, just so plain is it that the covenant which was entered into by it and of which it was the seal is not done away. That covenant remains now as it did when every male child was required to be made heir of the promises by this ordinance. The covenant was not abrogated by the law; for the apostle assures us that "the covenant that was confirmed before of God *in Christ*, the law, which was 430 years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect." It was confirmed in Christ, because "to Abraham and His seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many, but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." Gal. 3, 17. And if there should be the least doubt remaining whether the promise in the old cove-

nant referred to spiritual things and was perpetual, it must vanish before these inspired words: "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Gal. 3, 29. But if the covenant remains and the initiatory ordinance is abolished, how can we become heirs of the covenant now? The answer is: by Baptism. Mark the words of the apostle: "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ . . . . And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise." Gal. 3, 27–29. Language could not state the truth more plainly. Nor is it a mere inference that Baptism has come in the room of circumcision. Who could desire this truth to be stated more explicitly than is done in these words of St. Paul: "In Christ also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: buried with Him in Baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him by the faith of the operation of God." Col. 2, 11–12. This truth would perhaps never have been called in question, had it not been that it conflicts with the theories of Anabaptists, who would by all means keep harmless babes from being made heirs of the promises. But how futile such attempts are is clear from these passages, as it is also from many others. For if children were heirs of the promises in the Old Testament, and these same promises continue now, so that we are also heirs of the same, what have the children done since, that they must now be excluded? Or where is there one word in the Scriptures that would even intimate that they should be excluded? And if there is no command to exclude, what right have people to forbid them to come, especially since Christ says "let them come"? Just as surely as children were entitled to be circumcised, just so surely they are entitled to Baptism now, as the promise is just as much to us and our children

now as ever, and Baptism is the door to the inheritance now as circumcision was of old.

2. *Baptism also proves our faith.* What good can a little water do? That is a question often asked. Is it not absurd to impute so much to so small a thing? Do you not subject yourselves to ridicule when you expect salvation through such an insignificant means? You perceive that similar objections can be made to those in the case of circumcision. And here again we must not look to the suggestions of reason, but to the word of the Lord, or we may fall. This word is clear: whether one knows how we can be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, how Baptism doth also now save us, or whether one does not know it, this word is clear: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." But it is a trial when the soul is required to trust in it. And especially with regard to infant Baptism is the trial in many cases severe. For whilst some would most foolishly let Satan rule in children's hearts without presenting grace to resist his work, and do this, too, upon the pretence of not interfering with their children's free choice for themselves, others doubt or deny that God has any grace for children or bestows any grace upon them. Anabaptists appeals to reason, and therefore they always will have followers. But you, my brethren, be ye vigilant against the delusions of Satan in regard to God's promises to children, and His merciful intention with regard to them! Thank God for the grace He bestowed upon you when ye were born again of water and the Holy Ghost, and present your children to Him also; and if ye cannot see how grace will be conveyed to them, remember that God does not ask you to see, but wants you to believe. And when it is said that Baptism profits nothing without faith, confess it: nothing is profitable to us in spiritual things without faith! but as without faith it is impossible to please God, and he that believeth not shall

be damned, present your children that God may save them by giving them faith; for according to Scripture, Baptism washes away sins, and this cannot be without faith. But if Baptists and Anabaptists say that children cannot believe and therefore must not be baptized, our answer must be: God knows better than the Baptists, and God says: "Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven . . . . But whoso shall offend one of these litte ones *which believe in me*, it were better that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea;" Matt. 18, 4–6; "Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein." Luke 18, 17. Therefore suffer little children to come to Him: He will make believers of them, even if you are not able to see how; and if the world, and some also even of those who bear the Christian name, will laugh, only do thou remain firm in the trial, this year and always, and be blessed! And this the more because you are sure that

3. *Baptism works regeneration.* It is not an idle ceremony, but a divinely-appointed sacrament. God does not institute meaningless rites. Nor does He tantalize us with representations and symbols and shadows of grace, without bestowing it. If Baptism were a mere harmless ceremony, which cannot confer anything upon the baptized, we could not see any propriety in infant Baptism either, and this simply because we could not see any virtue or use in any kind of Baptism that is a mere symbol. In that case it would be even less than circumcision, for that admitted the circumcised into covenant relation with God and made them heirs of the promise. So, "as many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ," and hence thus became heirs of the promises. Gal. 3, 27. They have not received merely a legal rite that demands, but

does not give. The Scriptures do not speak so disparagingly of God's ordinances as do men who call them empty human ceremonies. The Scriptures say: "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, *for the remission of sins*, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Acts 2, 38. "The like figure whereunto *Baptism doth also now save us.*" 1 Pet. 3, 21. "According to His mercy hath He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Tit. 3, 5. He sanctifies and cleanses the church "with the washing of water by the word." It bestows grace unto salvation: of course not in such a way that every baptized person is necessarily saved, but in such a way that every baptized person has salvation offered him, and it is his own fault if he does not accept and enjoy the proffered gift. Baptism works regeneration as the Word does: as not every hearer is regenerate, so is not every baptized person; but as every hearer has salvation offered, so has every one that is baptized. It makes us heirs of the promise by faith.

4. *Finally, the baptized are pledged to live in the name of Jesus.* "As many as are baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Gal. 3, 27. They have believed in His name, if they have not resisted the divine will respecting them; for Baptism has brought them God's grace and enabled them to believe. They have entered into covenant relations with God: God is pledged to save them, and they are pledged to permit themselves to be saved: to continue steadfast in the faith, and to add to their faith virtue. To do this is ever our duty: Baptism saves us only on the condition that we break not the covenant into which we enter by it, and that the grace which it brings is permitted to do its saving work. Let us trust that grace anew, now that a new year has begun. Let us endeavor to be faithful in it to our Jesus and to the calling where-

with we are called, walking worthy of God unto all pleasing. Thus will we continue in the salvation which Jesus acquired for us by His obedience to the law; thus will His holy name be upon us, and thus will we fulfill the apostolic precept, Col. 3, 17: "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him." We are baptized into Christ, and receive the grace and assume the obligation to live under Him in His kingdom. All that God required of us Christ fulfilled, living and dying to satisfy His demands. All that He merited by His submission from His circumcision to His crucifixion, is made over to us in our Baptism. "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by Baptism into death, that like as He was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Rom. 6, 3. 4. The covenant of grace that God has made with us in Baptism pledges us to walk worthy of Jesus, whilst we trust in Him for salvation and are thankful.

It is a precious name, that name of Jesus. He was so called because He should save His people from their sins. It is thus full of consolation, telling us constantly of the pardon and peace which He has secured and now bestows. In that name let us enter cheerfully upon the New Year, assured that whether we live or die it shall be well with us while He is our guide and strength. In all the labors and trials of life His grace will be sufficient for us, and when death comes it will secure us the victory. We know not what the year will bring us, but we do know that Jesus will not forsake us. In His name let us go on our way rejoicing until our journey is ended, and we shall be for ever with Him in the place which His love has prepared for us. Our blessed Jesus grant us all such a mind, that we may have a happy new year. Amen.

Sunday after New Year.

MATT. 2, 13–23.

And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and His mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy Him. When he arose, he took the young child and His mother by night, and departed into Egypt; and was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son. Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked by the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not. But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, Arise, and take the young child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life. And he arose, and took the young child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee: and he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

Dear Brethren in Christ:

Soon after the announcement of the good tidings which makes Christmas so joyous a festival, our minds are directed to the sufferings which await our Lord and the tribulations through which we too must pass. It is proper

that we should know and consider what it cost to secure to us the salvation which the Gospel brings; it is proper too that we should be made aware of the trials which we must endure and the sorrows we must share, notwithstanding the great salvation which we possess, before we enter into the joys of our Lord in heaven. Christ was set for a sign that should be spoken against; many should be offended in Him and should fall; a sword should pierce through Mary's soul. Soon came the shedding of the first drops of blood in the circumcision of our Lord, an earnest of that poured out on Calvary; and this is followed by the murder of the innocent children at Bethlehem. The jubilant joy of angels and men at the wonderful birth seems destined to be of short duration. And yet it is for all time as well as for all people. The Savior must suffer and die—His disciples must pass through tribulations; but the victory is won.

HELL RAGES IN VAIN AGAINST THE HOLY CHILD JESUS.

Of this let us assure ourselves anew to-day. Our text shows that 1. *Hell rages against Christ* indeed, but that 2. *Hell rages against Christ in vain.*

I. *Hell rages against the Holy Child.* Herod is instigated to seek His destruction; the wise men are employed to aid by acting as informants, and Herod's wrath waxes hot when they mock him; the murder of the poor children is planned and executed in hell's fury to destroy the Holy Child Jesus.

1. When the Savior was born there was little attention paid on earth to the Child that was laid in the manger. But the heavens were moved, and the angels desired to look into the mystery of God manifest in the flesh. The

angel of the Lord, with the glory of the Lord shining around, brought the good tidings to the shepherds, and a multitude of the heavenly host sang the praises of God, which men failed to bring before His throne. And hell was also moved. It was not conjubilant with song, as were the heavens when the King of glory took up His lowly abode on earth. But it was aroused. The empire of darkness was threatened and rose up in its fury to defend its possessions. The devil and Herod both feared for their crowns. Christ had come to set up His kingdom of grace and righteousness, in which His subjects should have peace and blessedness. But the establishment of this eternal kingdom of light and life was well understood to be a menace to the kingdom of darkness and death. The seed of the woman had come to bruise the serpent's head. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." 1 John 3, 8. He could not save without overcoming the foe of all salvation, by whose cunning the great calamity of sin and destruction had come upon us. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same, that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Heb. 2, 14, 15. The set time for man's deliverance had come, and Satan was alarmed, as he had reason to be. Therefore he arose in his might and his madness to make war upon the Majesty of heaven who had humbled Himself on earth. He employs Herod as his instrument to compass the destruction of the Child that endangered his kingdom of darkness. And Herod was ready. He trembled too for his crown. He was content to let the devil reign in hell, if he could only rule on earth. And this new-born King of the Jews seemed to him to render that reign dubious.

If this Child should obtain the crown of Judea, as circumstances seemed to indicate that he would in course of time, then Herod would be a king discrowned and discarded and despised. The thought of this the vain man could not endure. Therefore he must arise in his might and his madness to avert the calamity. And so hell's fury is aroused against the Christ of God.

> "Why, Herod, unrelenting foe,
> Doth the Lord's coming move thee so?
> He doth no earthly kingdom seek
> Who brings His kingdom to the meek."

But because He brings His kingdom of blessedness to the meek, the prince of darkness frets, and makes use of Herod to destroy the new-born King.

2. The wise men had come from afar to do homage to the Messiah, having been led to Jerusalem by a star. These Herod called, inquired carefully what time the star appeared, and "sent them to Bethlehem and said, Go and search diligently for the young Child; and when ye have found Him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship Him also." Sin is always hateful, but is never more hateful than when it is coupled with pious pretensions. In Herod it is monstrous. He fears for his crown. He wants to destroy the new-born Child who inspires the fear. He pretends that his interest in the Child arises from his desire to worship Him. What cold-blooded lying and plotting of murder, and what foul hypocrisy! God would not let the wise men be used as tools of the villain. After they had found the Christ and presented Him their gifts, "being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way." Herod's discomfiture should have led him to reflection. Would not the weary waiting and the thoughts

which it suggested bring doubts and fears in view of the unrighteousness of his course and of the wages of sin? Did not, when the darkness came, the thought haunt him that his course led to destruction and that it would be wise to retrace his steps? O brethren, sin has a hardening power. There is no sign of repentance in the erring king. On the contrary, "when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, he was exceedingly wroth." When the soul stubbornly rejects the truth and the right, all the providential dealings of God that should lead them to stop and think, fail to awaken earnest reflection; and all that interferes with the consummation of wicked purposes, and that thus retards the downward rush to destruction, only arouses anger and intensifies hostility. Herod was warned to discontinue his godless course, but he despised the forbearance of God and hardened himself in sin.

3. Hence he plans and executes the murder of the innocents at Bethlehem, so that they become the first Christian martyrs. Of what wickedness man is capable is shown us in Herod. Such monstrosities of heartlessness might seem impossible in man and possible only in devils, if examples did not prove them realities. The selfish king is determined to accomplish his purpose, cost what it may. The Christ Child must be put out of the way, otherwise his foolish heart cannot feel secure in his possession of the throne. But how could this be done? The means employed to discover the Child had failed. How should he destroy the feared one that he could not find? Satan and his wicked heart devised a way that seemed to him infallibly sure. "Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men." In every household weeping mothers

mourned the loss of their murdered babes, and fathers' hearts were desolate as they looked on the scenes of blood that bereaved them of their children. These horrors were enacted to banish the fears and gratify the base desires of one man, who was ready to sacrifice the lives of thousands —even to murder hundreds of innocent children—to render his own secure. And could not God, as He looked down from heaven and saw the poor little ones writhing under the knife and heard their cry of pain, prevent the outrage? Could He find no thunderbolt to blast the bloody tyrant and lay his murdering minions low, before their deed of woe and shame was done? Brethren, let us not judge God by our human feelings, that are so much tainted by sin. His thoughts are not our thoughts. Yes, He can do all things: He could have prevented the massacre of the children. But it was not His good pleasure to prevent the murder by His omnipotence, as it is not His good pleasure in so many other cases forcibly to prevent human wrong and outrage. He has His wise purposes, and He doeth all things well. It is not for us to question His ways and works—for us, who see so dimly, but who know, though we do not see how each step tends to the accomplishment of good designs, that "the Lord is righteous in all His ways and holy in all His works." Ps. 145, 17. God is good and wise, and all His ways are mercy and all His paths are peace; but we are not able, with our limited powers, to understand the ways of His wisdom and goodness, but must often exclaim: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!" Rom. 11, 33. He permitted the helpless babes to be innocently murdered. Therefore it is well thus, though we may not be able to explain it all. We will not say that the parents of Bethlehem were punished now for their indifference to the Holy Child that was born

among them. Perhaps so: they did not welcome the Christ; they did not worship the new-born King; they did not join the angels as they sang their hymn of glory to God in the highest. Perhaps this suffering came upon them on account of their unbelief and ingratitude. But the children were innocent; and if the iniquities of the fathers were visited upon them, they were still innocents who suffered for the sake of the Holy Child Jesus, whom Herod desired to murder. And thus they were the first Christian martyrs, whose death was to be a witness for Christ and whose blood was to be the seed of the Church. And this too must be taken into account when we consider the massacre at Bethlehem and the divine permission of such a horror. That the children were slain because of the Savior that was born in the city of David is manifest: Herod murdered them because this seemed to Him the surest way of murdering Jesus. But that they were witnesses of Christianity and therefore properly entitled to the name of martyrs is not so evident upon the surface. And yet it is so. Their death is undisputably a testimony for Christ. They could not understand the doctrine which the Savior proclaimed and could not with their mouths confess Him and His Word. There was a natural impediment to this. They were not able therefore to be martyrs in the sense that they declared the truth with their voices while they were made to suffer for holding and confessing it, and that they died under tortures in confirmation of the faith which their oral confession kept before the people who witnessed their death. But they were witnesses still. Their death declared, though their words could not, that sin and death had come into the world and was reigning among men, else how could there be such brutish men as this Herod and such horrid massacres as that of these children? That is a loud testimony as to the need of the Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And the hostility of hell

and of Herod to this new-born King of the Jews, a fierce hostility that culminated in this wholesale murder of the children in Bethlehem and in all the coasts thereof, was it not a testimony that Jesus is the Christ? The death of these children was the witness that the Christ has come, inasmuch as it was the result of the heathen's rage and the kings' setting themselves against the Lord and against His Anointed. And the witness has been heard in all the ages since, and has not been in vain. The Holy Child, against whom the rage of hell was directed, was not destroyed.

II. *Hell rages against Christ in vain.* All its fury fails of its end. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath and vex them in His sore displeasure. Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." Ps. 2, 4–6. All the planning and all the cruelty of Satan and Herod were unavailing. Their wicked will was baffled, and God's good will was done.

1. The will of Satan and of Herod was hindered and thwarted. It was a will characterized by folly, and that failed utterly. Its folly was manifest. The scheme for the destruction of the Holy Child seemed shrewdly laid indeed. The wise men would not fail to report to the king that wanted to join in worshiping the Savior; the Savior would not escape when all the children under two years of age in Bethlehem and vicinity were slain. That was the wicked reasoning of the wicked king. But it was stupidly reasoned out after all, not only because it all proved such a miserable failure in fact, but because there was no sufficient account made of the factors in the problem. If this new-born King of the Jews was a mere man, how could the helpless, friendless Babe hurt Herod or undermine his authority? Was it not a cowardly fear that seized him when he trembled on account of the Child

at Bethlehem—the poor, friendless Child that was laid in a manger and that only the shepherds deigned to notice? But if He was more than man, what consummate folly was it not to suppose that He would be destroyed! Gamalial reasoned better when he concluded: If this counsel be of God, ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found even to fight against God. Acts 5, 39. That is the height of absurdity, to take up arms against the Almighty. And yet this truculent Herod, if the Holy Child was not mere man, but really the Eternal Son of God, undertook to murder Him—to murder God! It was the fatuity of sin. That the folly resulted in failure is just what there was reason to expect. The wise men mock the king and return by another route, as the Lord in a dream directed them. They had come under the guidance of Jehovah to worship the Savior and bring Him gifts, not to be accomplices in His murder, and the Lord whom they served would not let them lend their aid to shed His blood. Herod felt the failure. He was exceeding wroth. In his wrath he carries out the terrible scheme of murdering the innocents at Bethlehem. He executes the bloody crime, and when his worst is done he has ignominiously failed! The Holy Child, for whose destruction the whole atrocious tragedy was undertaken, was not among the dead. God kept watch and ward over His Anointed. "Behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young Child and His mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him. When he arose he took the young Child and His mother by night, and departed into Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod." God gave His angels charge over the Son of His love, and all the fury of hell could not harm Him as long as His time was not yet come to lay down His life freely as a ransom for all men. While the children of

Bethlehem were lying bleeding, the Holy Child was on the way to Egypt, and not a hair of His head was harmed. There He remained until Herod's death, and all the arts of the Savior's foes were baffled. And Herod died. He died a death that corresponded to his dreadful life. His thoughts were still intent upon murder, even when his limbs were growing cold, and the foulness of his soul was fitly indicated by the intolerable stench emitted by his body. Even before life was extinct the worms began their work, and putrefaction came before his spirit had left its abode. The raging of hell and of Herod against Christ was in vain. They were discomfited.

2. While the will of the devil was baffled, the will of God was done. The Child's life was preserved, notwithstanding all the murderous efforts of the foe, and the wrath of man was made to praise Him by contributing to the fulfillment of prophecy.

The word of promise was fulfilled in Jesus in all its fullness: "He shall give His angels charge over Thee, to keep Thee in all Thy ways." Ps. 91, 11. The angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and commanded him to flee with the Child into Egypt; the angel of the Lord appeared to him again in a dream in Egypt and commanded him to return with the Child to the land of Israel. God's good providence was over Him at every step of His lowly journey through this vale of tears, and the angels were ministering spirits to guard His life and supply His needs. It is marvelous that the Holy Child, who is Maker and Monarch of the universe, must be preserved by fleeing from the wrath and power of Herod. What could this pigmy effect against the great King of glory? Can it be that He who upholds all by the word of His power, must be a fugitive from the impotent rage of this puny foe! It is even so. The humiliation of our Lord

surpasses all the marvels of earth. But if the ways of God are wonderful, they are full of mercy and unerringly lead to the goal of His goodness. The Holy Child was brought to a place of safety, and the pitiless swords of Herod's hirelings could not touch Him. So God graciously leads His people still who are the chosen in His dear Son. Sometimes the path seems strange on which He leads them; sometimes they must pass through humiliations at which the world stares in astonishment; but He always leads them safely, and always brings them to victory and happiness.

The fury of the foe was made tributary, by the directing providence of God, to the fulfillment of several prophecies referring to the Savior. These prophecies are not among the clearest contained in Holy Scripture. They belong to that class which we usually called mystical, because they are not set forth plainly in words, but need an explanation by the Holy Spirit to enable us to understand their meaning. With such explanation the subject becomes perfectly clear. In our text the meaning of several such prophecies is pointed out while their fulfillment is shown. Our Lord was in Egypt "until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son." The words cited from Hosea 11, 1 refer to Israel, whom the Lord called out of Egypt and brought to the land of Canaan. But Israel was a type of Christ. As he was called out of Egypt so should the only begotten Son be called out of Egypt, and the calling of the former was a prophecy and a promise of the calling of the latter. That prophecy and promise we now understand in its mystical import as it is fulfilled in the narrative of our text. The words cited from Jeremiah 31, 15 do not refer directly to the wailing that went up from Bethlehem because of Herod's

bloody work. The prophet has in view the sorrowing of Rachel's descendants, on account of the captivity into which the Israelites were led for their sin. But if that was a cause of lamentation in Rama, a village near Bethlehem, much more should there be weeping and wailing when a fiercer foe should rage against the true Israel and cause the desolation in Bethlehem, where Rachel lay buried. That wailing hundreds of years before in Rama was the prophecy of the wailing that now took place because of the massacre of the children, and in this was fulfilled the whole meaning of Jeremiah's words. And when by the direction of God the Holy Child, after the return from Egypt, was brought to Nazareth, that was fulfilled "which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene." There is no particular prophet and no particular passage cited. But He was the Branch concerning whom prophets had spoken. For example Jeremiah 23, 5 it is written: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch." From the Hebrew word translated "branch" the town of Nazareth probably received its name. But the place was despised, so that the question is asked, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" John 1, 46. Of our Lord it is written that He was "despised and rejected of men." He was the sign spoken against. And this was fulfilled when He dwelt in Nazareth and was called a Nazarene. The will of the Lord was accomplished amid all the raging of the foes, and the prophecies concerning Him were fulfilled even through their mad efforts to compass His destruction.

The foe still rages against Christ and His Church, and there would be reason to tremble for Zion if it had not an almighty Protector. As Satan and Herod raged in vain against the Holy Child, so they rage in vain against the purchase of His blood. The Church is built

upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against her. The Lord is her refuge and strength; she is safe under His almighty protection. And that God that guided the Christ Child is our guide also, and will never forsake them that put their trust in Him. We are redeemed; we are called to be His and enjoy His salvation. Fear not: Lo, He is with you alway Amen.

Epiphany.

MATT. 2, 1–11.

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young Child; and when ye have found Him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship Him also. When they had heard the king, they departed; and lo, the star which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down, and worshiped Him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him their gifts: gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

Beloved in the Lord:

Our Savior was sent first to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and therefore His own personal ministrations were almost exclusively to them. They were the chosen people to whom the great salvation should be brought and through whom it should be communicated to others. Therefore to them the announcement of the Savior's birth was first made, and the first Epiphany, or manifestation of our Lord, was to them. When the wonder-

ful Babe was born at Bethlehem, "the angel of the Lord came upon them and the glory of the Lord shone round about them." But the redemption was not to be confined to them. God so loved *the world* that He gave His only begotten Son; and the angel said to the shepherds of Judea, around whom the glory of the Lord shone, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." Therefore He was manifested also to the Gentiles. Of this epiphany, which word means manifestation, our text speaks, and the day is called Epiphany because of this manifestation, as all the Gospel lessons for the Epiphany season speak of the manifestation of our Savior in His glory and power. This festival is sometimes called the Gentile Christmas, because it celebrates the coming of heathens to see the glory of the Lord. Our text tells us how

THE HEATHEN COME TO WORSHIP CHRIST,

and upon this cheering fact we purpose to speak to-day. We shall show that I. *They come to Christ*, and II. *They worship Christ.*

I. *The Gentiles come to the Savior.* "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east and have come to worship Him." These wise men were undoubtedly Gentiles or heathens, having come from the eastern country beyond the boundaries of Judea. They are called magians, and that would indicate that they came from Persia; but from whatever land of the east they came, they were certainly Gentiles. The narrative shows that God calls heathen people into His kingdom also, and that these come to Him and are saved.

1. The Gentiles are called to share the blessings of the kingdom, and therefore they come to Jesus. The Lord wants them also to share His blessings; therefore He made known to the wise men the tidings of the Savior's birth, and conducted them by the star to Bethlehem, where the young Child was.

To the Jews it seemed as if they alone were to be the recipients of the Savior and of the unspeakable gift of salvation in Him, and they prided themselves upon Jehovah's partiality for them and the preference given them over other people. But this was a misunderstanding. They were His chosen people, and from them the Messiah should spring. That high privilege was theirs. Among them too the way of the Lord should be prepared, and to them therefore were committed the oracles of God, and the precious promises of that Messiah's coming and work of redemption. This was an advantage pertaining to the Jews, and in that respect they were a preferred people, the chosen of the Lord. But it was a misunderstanding to assume that, because salvation was of the Jews, it was confined to them. They should first receive the good tidings and have the honor of being its first bearers to men; but they were to make these tidings known to all men, because the precious truth unto salvation concerned all men. The heathen were included in God's merciful design, not excluded. The Gospel is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." Rom. 1, 16. That was the plan of God from the beginning, that both Jew and Gentile should have part in the redemption. Hence St. Paul writes to the Romans: "Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers; and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to Thee among the Gentiles and sing unto Thy

name. And again he saith, Rejoice ye Gentiles with His people. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles, and laud Him, all ye people. And again Isaiah saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and He that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in Him shall the Gentiles trust." Rom. 15, 8–12. These prophecies, cited by the great apostle of the Gentiles from the Old Testament Scriptures, show that from the beginning the good tidings were designed for all people, as in the fullness of time they were declared to all people. The promise was given to the church and was fulfilled in its time: "The Gentiles shall come to Thy light and kings to the brightness of Thy rising." Is. 60, 3.

Probably this passage suggested the opinion which has been handed down from the olden time, that the wise men spoken of in our text were oriental kings. In accordance with this tradition the present festival is sometimes called that of the holy three kings. But it is not known what titles they bore, nor is it known how many there were. They came from afar; the gifts which they brought indicated that they were wealthy; the distance which they came and other circumstances show that they were not Jews, but Gentiles. That is about all that is known with certainty about these wise men. But they came to Jesus, and this could not have been if the tidings of His birth had not been brought to them and they had not been called to come. "How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed, and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?" Rom. 10, 14. How God made known to them the glorious fact that the Messiah had now come, is not stated and we do not know. But they knew it, and nature did not tell them. They knew it; for when they had come to Jerusalem they inquired, "Where is He that is born king of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship

Him." Nature did not tell them; for though the heavens declare the glory of God and all the earth proclaims His goodness, neither sky nor land nor sea knows anything of the Word made flesh, and of His life and sufferings and death for our salvation. These facts took place after the heavens and the earth were made, and are not to be read in the creation. God must declare them, and the purpose of them, otherwise man must die without the knowledge. To these wise men the truth was communicated, however that communication may have been made; and it should not surprise us if it pleased God to make a special revelation to them, as the first-fruits of the Gentiles.

So much of the great miracle wrought in behalf of the establishment of the Church among the heathen is told us, that the wise men, having learned that the King had come, were led to the place of His birth by the star which had appeared to them. The text tells us expressly that after they had parted from Jerusalem "the star, which they saw in the east, went before them and stood over where the young Child was." This renders it well-nigh certain that this star had been their guide during the whole journey from the east country, until it had conducted them to Jerusalem, and there left them for a little while, that inquiries might be made which would arouse Herod and the chief priests and scribes to take some interest in the new-born King. What the nature of the star was, and how it served to show them the way which they were to take, is not revealed to us, and it is best to confess our ignorance when we do not know. But it was the means which God used for the guidance of the wise men, and in His hand it served its purpose perfectly.

2. They come to the Savior. The Lord that calls them also gives them grace to heed the call and come to Him. They are not disheartened; they press on to Bethlehem, to which all the circumstances urge them; they are

not offended at what they find when their destination is reached, but recognize their Lord, whom they came to worship.

When the wise men made their inquiries at Jerusalem, their visit and its object were soon known throughout the city, and "when Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him." His trouble was about the kingdom, as the wise men had inquired about one "that is born King of the Jews." He had been giving little attention to religious matters and to those who were employed about them, but now in his trouble he thought of them, though not for the purposes of worship. "When he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea; for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda; for out of thee shall come a Governor that shall rule my people Israel." The religious teachers of the time could give all the needed information from the Scriptures, and Herod was ready to accept their instruction and to act accordingly. He had the wise men come to him with a view of ascertaining when the star appeared, that he might thus know the time of the birth, which was necessary for the execution of his murderous purpose; then sent them to Bethlehem to make diligent search for the Child, with instructions to report to him when they had found Him, pretending that he too was desirous of worshiping the new-born King. The wise men went on their journey, though not to be the tools of Herod, and the star again performed its office as guide. They were not discouraged by their experience in Jerusalem, though it was certainly not of a nature to awaken enthusiasm. The people there seemed to know nothing of the wonderful birth of the great King,

though it happened only a few miles from the city. Even the priests, who knew the Scriptures and might be expected to have special interest in the fulfillment of the great prophecy in which all centered, knew nothing about the good tidings of great joy, and had to learn it first from people that came from a far country and were Gentiles. That was a trial of their faith. Could it be that there was an event so marvelous in Bethlehem, and the people of the neighboring city of Jerusalem know nothing of it? Were they not after all deceived by the voice that told them of the birth and by the star that brought them thus far on their way? But they were not to be deterred from their purpose by such thoughts. They knew that the King of the Jews had been born, and they now only wanted to find Him. Therefore they went on their way to the place which prophets designated and to which the star led. So there is many a circumstance that tends to discourage and to awaken doubts now also. We are often disappointed at the ignorance and coldness manifested where we expected deep knowledge and experience to counsel and direct us, and where we supposed that glowing zeal would increase our ardor and offer strong encouragement. It is sad that there are so many disappointments in this regard. But let us not be disheartened when our expectations are not met in men, but press on, like the wise men, assured that in the Lord our expectations of help and health and salvation will not be disappointed.

When the wise men, obeying the directions given them, reach the place where He that is born King of the Jews was to be found, a severer trial still awaits them. The star which they saw in the east "came and stood over where the young child was." They did not fail to find Him that is born King of the Jews. When they were

come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary His mother. We do not know what scenes of grandeur and of glory they may have pictured in their imaginations to be realized at the finding of the King. The narrative confines itself to the naked statement of facts. But it was the King of the Jews whose star they had seen in the east, and if they expected to find Him in a palace arrayed in robes of royalty, who could blame them? And they found Him in a stable wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger! He could be a King for all that, but it requires something more than human reason to recognize the Lord of all the earth under such circumstances. That He was so obscure that His coming was not even known to the people of Jerusalem, was discouraging enough to the Gentile visitors from abroad; that he was despised and rejected of men, crowded out of the inn, and not even supplied with what is generally regarded as becoming and proper to ordinary babes, is not assuring to men who come to find a King, and such a King as challenges men's worship. Would not some of you, my brethren, in such a trial have succumbed? Would you not have come to the conclusion that this cannot be the King of the Jews, and that some melancholy deception had been practiced upon you? I fear that some of us would not have endured the severe probation. And yet we are not without similar trials now. How often does not the soul find lowliness and suffering when honor and gladness was expected, and expected not without reason? Do we not, when we come to Jesus, think rightly that joy and even glory shall be ours? And do we not find instead manifold tribulations and even scorn? And many on that account are offended in our Lord, not merely that they see Him in His lowliness, but that they are called to follow Him into the valley of humiliation and reap shame and affliction instead of honor and blessedness in His service.

But Jesus is the King of glory, whatever the appearances may be during His sojourn upon earth and the days of humiliation; and His disciples shall share His glory, whatever may be their sufferings and afflictions in the days of their pilgrimage. The wise men rejoiced to find the Lord, and recognized the great King in all the lowliness of the surroundings. Let their example stimulate us to trust in the word of the Lord, though it be not given us to see what our faith embraces. Notwithstanding all that might lead them to doubt and to abandon their purpose, they not only come to Jesus, but also worship Him. Thus we have those heathen visiting from the east giving the glory to the Messiah which is His due. Of this we have yet a few words to speak.

II. *The Gentiles worship Christ.* "When they were come into the house, they saw the young Child, with Mary his mother, and fell down and worshiped Him; and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh." They worship Him with the devotion of their hearts and with the gifts of their hands.

1. They rejoiced with exceeding great joy when they saw the star that should bring them to the Child; and when they saw the Child, whom they recognized as King of the Jews, they fell down and worshiped Him. The external action was a fitting expression and sign of their inward adoration. Their hearts bowed in reverence before that wondrous Child whose star they had seen in the east, and the bending of the knee and the whole outward form of worship was the natural utterance of that which was within. But such worship was not accorded a merely human Child, however great. That voice which made known to them that the long predicted King of the Jews was born and that made it certain to them that this Child in the manger is that great King, no doubt declared to

them also that this lowly Child was their God and their Savior. They did not come to practice idolatry. They did not come to offer divine worship to a human being like themselves. What inducement could they have had to fall down in adoration before a babe of obscure birth, surrounded with all the indications of poverty, if a revelation had not been given them of the nature of the wonderful person whose star they had seen? What they heard at Jerusalem from the prophet, that out of Bethlehem should come a Governor to rule over Israel, was in exact accord with what they knew when they came to Jerusalem inquiring for Him that is born King of the Jews. In faith they pursued their way to the humble abode of the Child, and recognized in Him their Lord and their God, concerning whom the prophet had said: "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon His kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." Is. 9, 6. 7. Glorious things had been spoken of Him, and the grace of God led the hearts of these Gentiles to put their trust in these good tidings; and when they saw the Holy Child in whom the hopes of the world were to be realized, they were ready to give Him the honor due to His great name. He was the Immanuel, God with us. He was the great King, whose kingdom of peace and blessedness should be everlasting; and the devotion of their hearts found its appropriate utterance when they fell down and worshiped the lowly Child as their Lord and their Savior. Behold, what God hath wrought among these Gentiles! And we, who have such a fullness of revelation concerning

this person and are so highly favored with His grace unto salvation, how slow we are to bend before Him and magnify His praises! Brethren, learn of the less favored heathens, and come and worship your Lord and your God who brings you salvation!

2. The wise men did something more than fall down and worship the Christ. They did what indicates the sincerity of such worship. "When they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh." These were costly presents which they had brought from the east country to honor the King of the Jews, in whose salvation and glory they were called to participate. In that too we should learn of these first Gentile worshipers to serve the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Is it not but too often the case that when people come professedly to worship the Savior, they murmur and complain if anything is said of gifts, and if any hint is given that such gifts would be an appropriate manifestation of the soul's sincerity in worship? It is true, we have not the Lord Jesus visibly among us, and cannot in that respect follow the example of the wise men who presented to Him their gifts. But He is among us nevertheless—He is with us every day. And although for His own person He has no need of our gold and frankincense and myrrh, He still has need of literal gold to carry on His work on earth, as He still delights to accept the gold of faith and the frankincense of prayer and the myrrh of daily repentance, which are offered to Him by His disciples. Let us learn, dear brethren, not to come empty-handed into the Lord's presence, although we can bring Him nothing to render us acceptable in His sight. His grace is all our hope. But trusting in His grace and being assured of pardon and salvation through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, let us cheerfully bring our gifts to

honor Him, to assist Him in His brethren, and to spread His name and salvation abroad in the earth.

It is a joyful announcement to us, not only that a Savior has come, but that He is a Savior to Jew and Gentile alike. We, who are descendants of the heathens, have reason to rejoice in the calling of the Gentiles, and to sing songs of gladness on Epiphany as well as on Christmas. The Word has directed us to Christ and made us sure that we too are accepted in the Beloved. Let us not neglect to come into His house and worship Him. And let us not worship with our lips only. Such service would be an abomination to Him who suffered death through love of us. Give Him your hearts—with all your hearts embrace His heavenly grace and glorify His beloved name. But that means thanking Him "with hearts and hands and voices." There is no sincerity in an adoration that refuses to do the Master's will or honor Him with earthly gifts. Bring your gifts for the extension of His kingdom. On this day of the Lord's manifestation to the Gentiles especially are we reminded to bring gifts that the unsearchable riches of Christ may be made known to all nations. Brethren, be missionaries, all of you. If you cannot go and tell the heathen that Christ calls them also to come to Him, bring your gold that others may be sent. Be glad in the Lord your Savior; magnify His name in the congregation; help to make His praise glorious in all lands. Amen.

First Sunday after Epiphany.

LUKE 2, 41–52.

Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem: and Joseph and His mother knew not of it. But they, supposing Him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found Him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking Him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. And when they saw Him, they were amazed: and His mother said unto Him, Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing. And He said unto them, how is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? And they understood not the saying which He spake unto them. And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but His mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.

This, dear brethren, is all that we know with certainty concerning the youth of our blessed Savior. There are indeed numerous legends extant respecting His words and works and ways before He reached the years of mature manhood, but they are mostly of a kind that contrast signally with the sober narratives of the Gospel and plainly manifest their human origin. They are mostly attempts to gratify an itching curiosity by telling of wonders that He wrought, though these wonders have no bearing upon the work which He was sent to perform. We can rest assured that all that is important for us to know is recorded

by the holy men who wrote by inspiration of God. But their only record of His youth is contained in our text. The evangelists pass on, with this one exception, from the account of His birth and infancy to that of His maturity, when He entered upon His public office as the Savior of the world. But in this one brief notice there is much instruction imparted, unimportant as the events may at first sight appear. Let us learn the

LESSONS FROM THE YOUTH OF JESUS.

1. The text teaches us, by the example of our Lord, that children should be early accustomed to attend public worship and engage in the service of God. "His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast." But they took Jesus with them. This was in accordance with the divine law: "Thrice in the year shall all your men children appear before the Lord God, the God of Israel." Ex. 34, 23. The example is given for our learning, and administers a rebuke to those who reject the duty of educating children for God, or, if they admit the duty, fail to perform it.

The duty of instructing children, as it is taught by example in our text, is taught by precept in many places of Scripture. For thus saith the Lord: "These words which I command thee this day shall be in thy heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Deut. 6, 6. 7. What a beautiful life it would be in the family if this precept were obeyed! And what a shame that it is so much neglected! What Christian can fail to see that, if we realize the great things which God has done for us, from the fullness of our hearts we will speak

of them to our children, that they too may see the goodness of God which richly blesses their little lives? And how strange is it not that some who profess to believe that Jesus is their Savior, even sneer at infant faith and prate about the injustice of giving children's minds an early bias in favor of the truth that alone can save their souls! Let us learn the lesson from the youth of our Lord, and bring our children to God, that they may serve Him in righteousness and be happy in the service.

Dear brethren, heed the old scriptural landmarks, and be faithful to the light which God has graciously given you. Bring your children to the Lord in Holy Baptism, that He may regenerate them by His Holy Spirit and make them children of God and heirs of heaven. Then teach them and train them as God's children. Teach them to observe all things that the Lord has commanded. Grow not weary in telling them of the Lord's gracious words and wonderful works. He is their Lord also, having marked them as His own. Heed what the apostle says: "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Eph. 6, 4. Go up to the Lord's house to hear His precious Word, and bring your children with you, that you and your house may serve the Lord.

The duty of educating children for the service of God no faithful reader of the Bible can fail to recognize. The obligation is upon parents to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. That is the most important duty laid upon us in regard to them. Everything else is secondary. The kingdom of God and His righteousness must be sought first. Parents may employ others to instruct their children, but as the responsibility rests upon them, they must see that the instruction is such as the Lord requires. Schools are established for the education of the young, and this is proper and right. Not every

parent is qualified to give the needful instruction, and not all have the necessary time, even if they have the necessary talent. It is a matter of economy for a number of parents to join together and to employ a teacher who can give his whole time to the important work, and such a teacher can train the children of a number of families at the same time. But the duty which God has enjoined remains the same, whether parents do the work themselves or employ others to do it in their stead. Bring the children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord: that is the Lord's command, and nothing can excuse us if we neglect it. Therefore a school that does not accomplish this must always in the eyes of Christians be a failure, no matter how efficient that school may be in other respects. There are other things to learn as well as the way of salvation. The children of God are to serve Him in their temporal as well as in their spiritual calling, and this implies instruction in the things needful for usefulness in this life as well as in the things that belong to our souls' peace. But the principal thing still must remain the wisdom that maketh wise unto salvation. Where that is wanting there is an essential lack. Hence the need of congregational schools, in which parents can perform the duty of training children for Christ, and the Church can discharge her obligation of feeding the Lord's lambs. In many cases it may be difficult to establish and maintain such schools, especially where as citizens we must bear our share of the burden imposed for the support of other schools which the State deems necessary for its purposes, but which fail to meet our wants as Christians. But the chief difficulty is in our own hearts. When we once realize the paramount importance of bringing up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and training them for usefulness on earth in the service of God, and for glory in heaven when their earthly work is done, all the difficulties will be

easily overcome and Christian schools will be as readily supported as Christian churches.

Brethren, it is needful in these times of religious indifference to think earnestly upon these things, and to beware lest we too be drawn into the errors that are so much in vogue and threaten so much danger to the State as well to the Church. Our Lord was taught at home according to the divine law, "These words which I command thee this day shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children," and our text shows how in His early youth the teaching bore rich fruit. Do you teach your children as the Lord our God commands? In our Catechism we find written over each of the chief parts the words, "As the Head of the Family should teach them in all simplicity to his Household." Have you overlooked the important direction? Or must I rather ask the question whether you have not laid aside the Catechism entirely and overlooked the precious truth which it contains, as well as the directions in regard to teaching it? That would be sad for you and for me. Let that little book, so full of light and love, be in constant use in your families and be a guide for the instruction of your children. Its treasures of truth will become more precious to you the more you impart them to the young, and the result of your work will be ever-increasing joy in the household that walks in the way of the Lord.

And when that is once your chief joy you will find no rest until provision has been made to have the education in the school to which you entrust your children conducted in the same spirit. For your responsibility has not ceased when you have committed them to the care of a teacher. If he does not teach the truth unto salvation, you must give account on the day of judgment for having entrusted to him the precious souls that God has entrusted to you with the command to train them for Him. Children are a

precious heritage, and woe upon those who neglect their eternal interests! Dear brethren, renounce the wicked ways which have become popular in these evil times, and return in humble simplicity to the good old ways of the Bible. Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness, and bring your children with you to the temple of God. And for your encouragement as well as for your admonition hear what the Holy Spirit says: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Prov. 22, 6.

2. The second lesson of our text seems less practical, as men commonly judge of the practical nowadays, but is precious nevertheless, and is none the less precious because it pertains to our faith rather than our life. "It came to pass that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers." Here was a youth of twelve years, whom His parents had taken with them to the feast at Jerusalem to engage in the service according to the law of the Lord, but at whom all the people wondered. There was here an epiphany of the Son of God, a manifestation of divine glory, that was marvelous to all who witnessed it.

We know who this Child was, and are not surprised that He should be a Teacher of the wisest of His times. And yet we too can learn from the narrative something important for the better understanding of the person and work of our blessed Lord. He was born in Bethlehem amid the lowliest surroundings, and was driven into Egypt to escape the murderous intents of Herod. After His return to Nazareth there was nothing in His life that would lead to the expectation of the wonderful things which He subsequently accomplished. He went up to Jerusalem, like any other pious child that was trained to serve God

and obey his parents. It was therefore a surprise to all that He should be found among the doctors and show Himself not only their equal in the learning of the law, but also their superior. It is a lesson to us concerning the glorious person whose outward appearance indicated nothing of the majesty which was His, and which was recognized in heaven even while He was despised on earth and rejected of men.

Even in His youth Christ was possessed of heavenly wisdom. He was found in the temple among the learned men of the time. But He was not here in the capacity of a mere learner, gladly as He had received the instruction given by Joseph and Mary, and humbly as He was willing to hear the doctors now and learn all that they had to teach concerning the will of God. He was already a Teacher, young and meek as He was, and His understanding and answers astonished the learned rabbis of the temple. We learn thus that He was more than the ordinary child He seemed to be: He was God manifest in the flesh—the Almighty Maker of all things, come into the world to seek and save that which was lost.

The narrative evinces that He was endowed with extraordinary powers even from His conception and birth. His external opportunities and application had not been such as to account for His superior learning and wisdom. It was confessedly wonderful, and we know, if the learned men in the temple did not, why it was so. He was God manifest in the flesh. Therefore marvelous wisdom beyond His years and circumstances shone forth in Him.

We might indeed suppose that one conceived of the Holy Ghost and born of a virgin, and thus entering the world without the sin that darkens our minds and depraves our sentiments, would have more vigorous intellectual powers than those which fallen man possesses. Even as a man our Savior excelled all His brethren, be-

cause He was without sin. But we may infer from the astonishment of the doctors that something more than human appeared to them in this youth of twelve summers. The Messiah here manifested forth His glory by a display of His divine wisdom, and the learned rabbis saw it and wondered. He was indeed subject to the law of growth, like other men. We are expressly told that "He increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." He was born a truly human child, and grew in body and mind like other children. But to such wisdom as that which astonished the teachers in the temple He had not, at twelve years of age, attained by the ordinary process of development. He was more than man. He was the Word made flesh. The Son of God had in Him assumed our human nature, and therefore wonders of wisdom and power did show forth themselves in Him.

And yet it was a truly human youth that was hearing the doctors and asking them questions. The humanity was not set aside when the divine wisdom was displayed in His teaching. It was the Son of Mary that was found in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors. That Son of Mary was the Son of God. He was but one person, though that person was both God and Man. He had the wisdom of a human child educated in the fear of God according to the law, and that wisdom was undimmed by the sin which darkens our understanding. But He had the wisdom also which belongs to God from eternity, and concerning which the apostle exclaims: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!" Rom. 11, 33. This wonderful person existed before Mary and David and Abraham. He was in the beginning with God, and all things were made by Him. But when the fullness of time was come He was made flesh. He became man, but he remained God. And now as a

human Child He was among the doctors and astonishing them by His wisdom. That was the wisdom of God acting through the human nature, which was joined to the divine nature existing from eternity. The Son of God communicated His attributes to the Son of Man. The two natures were one person. The youth in the temple was God and Man. "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh." 1. Tim. 3, 16.

But that mystery is full of comfort. It shows us how our salvation was secured—how God could be just and still a justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. For the Son of God took upon Himself our nature that He might not only be our Teacher, but that He might fulfill all righteousness in our stead. Learn here to know your mighty Savior, who is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto Him. He is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world because He is Immanuel, God with us; and He is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

3. Another lesson that our gospel teaches us is that we should faithfully discharge the duties of our vocation, even though this should bring pain to ourselves and others. When the parents of our Lord "had fulfilled the days, as they returned the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and His mother knew not of it. But they supposing Him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found Him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem." After three days they found Him among the doctors in the temple. "And when they saw Him, they were amazed: and His mother said unto Him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing. And He said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye

not that I must be about my Father's business? And they understood not the saying which He spake unto them."

It would seem strange that Joseph and Mary should travel a whole day without missing their child, were it not that the evangelist furnishes the explanation. There was a large company traveling together to and from the feast, and among them were relatives and acquaintances of the holy family. The fact that the absence of Jesus from the company was not noticed until the evening came does not therefore imply sinful negligence on the part of the parents. They thought that He was among their friends, and became anxious about Him only when night set in. Then they began their search, and not finding Him in the company, they returned sorrowing to Jerusalem, where they found Him in the midst of the doctors in the temple.

But as there was no culpable carelessness on the part of the parents, neither was there any lack of dutifulness on the part of the Child. There was reproach in the words of the mother, "Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? Behold Thy Father and I have sought Thee sorrowing." It seemed to her unkind that He should give His parents pain. But it was because she did not yet fully understand the mission of her Son, and her reference to His father's sorrow as well as her own is met with words that correct her application of the name. Joseph, as the husband of Mary, stood in the relation to Him of father by adoption. But God was His Father in reality, and had sent Him on a mission of mercy into the world. That mission is paramount. "Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me), to do Thy will, O God." Heb. 10, 7. Therefore in reply to the words of censure He speaks words that also have a tinge of reproach: "How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Could they not know by this time that He had a calling above other men and that at

every cost that calling must be fulfilled? There was no need for their anxiety and quest; for He must do His Father's bidding, and all would be well, whatever betide.

The business in which the Holy Child must be engaged is one that highly concerns us all. "For God sent His Son into the world not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." John 3, 17. In order to accomplish this salvation He was made under the law as He was born of a woman. He must therefore be obedient to all the ordinances of God, and was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. But He must also teach the way of salvation, and therefore not only went up to the feast in obedience to the divine commandment, but must also show the doctors what Moses and the prophets mean. He must be about His Father's business even in His youth, although the full time had not yet come for the uninterrupted public discharge of His office as the Messiah. It was His mission to teach, and then to offer Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world and reign until every enemy should be put under His feet. And now He teaches in the temple to the astonishment of all who heard Him. Mary did not understand His work, but she kept all these sayings in her heart and understood them afterwards, as we are led by the grace of God to understand them and to rejoice in the great salvation which He taught and wrought.

To that great and high vocation our Savior was faithful, even though it should bring pain to others and greater pain to Himself. Certainly we should not inflict upon any creature unnecessary suffering. I see no excuse for needlessly even treading upon a worm. Christianity does not sanction, much less does it inculcate, the causing of pain to any creature. Cruelty to ourselves or others is entirely foreign to the teachings of our Savior. It is an indication

of impiety to be heartless in the treatment even of a brute. "A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast, but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." Prov. 12, 10. But when, because of the disorder that sin has brought into the world, the performance of our heavenly Father's will incidentally causes suffering to ourselves or others, we must not shrink from the labor of love because of the pain that by accident attends it. Our Lord's employment about His Father's business was the occasion of sorrow to Joseph and Mary, as it was afterwards the cause of extreme suffering to Himself when He offered Himself as a Sacrifice for the sins of the world. But the end was glorious. The Father's business was man's salvation, and the final result was deliverance from every evil and suffering.

Our pain and tribulation cannot work out such an end. And yet our fidelity to our vocation and our suffering in subservience to that may all be tributary to the accomplishment in us of the great end for which our Savior suffered and died. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." 2 Cor. 4, 17. 18. Sometimes it would be sinful not to inflict pain, because it would be a failure to discharge the duty of love which, although it may bring momentary sorrow, will eventually contribute to everlasting happiness. "What son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" Let us too be about our Father's business, and if, in consequence of that, sorrow come to us or to others, God will render that also a blessing. As matters now stand in the world, which lieth in wickedness, "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." Acts 14, 22.

4. Finally, our text teaches us, by the example of the Lord, that children should obey their parents in all

things. "He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them." As the parents are bound to train their children according to the will of God and must give account of their stewardship in this as in every other regard, so the children are bound to honor their father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise. "We should fear and love God, that we may not despise our parents and masters, nor provoke them to anger, but give them honor, serve and obey them, and hold them in love and esteem." From such obedience no one is exempted. This is illustrated in the youth of our Lord. If there ever was a child that could be thought free from the obligation of the fourth commandment, that Child was Jesus, who, while He was the Son of Mary, was Mary's Lord. But He was made under the law, and was obedient, and thus enforces by His example the law of subjection to parents. Children, learn the lesson, and walk in the footsteps of your Lord and Savior. Obey your parents in all things, for this is right, and this is the way of happiness.

There are indeed cases in which parents require of children what God forbids, or forbid what God commands. When such an unhappy conflict occurs, it is manifest that the will of the human superiors must not be allowed to set aside the will of the supreme authority, which is divine. For such cases it is written, "We ought to obey God rather than man." Acts 5, 29. But we must be sure that it is the will of God that guides us in such refusal to do the will of our parents. God has commanded us to honor them, and only when it is clear from His explicit word that obeying them in any special case would be disobedience to a divine command, can we be dispensed from such obedience, and then only in that special case, while the general obligation to obey them remains. The opinion that a child must be obedient only when obedience seems

reasonable or expedient is subversive of all law and government. Then the judgment of those who are to be subject is accepted as the standard, and the will of the child, not the will of the parent, supplies the law. And children sometimes in fact, and certainly often in their own estimation, surpass their parents in learning and wisdom, so that conflicts between their own judgment and that of their parents would occur every day. The youth of our age and country is but too apt to cast off parental restraints, and all the more needful is it that the law of God, as illustrated in the example of our Lord, should be earnestly inculcated and rigidly enforced.

They that reject this law must not flatter themselves that they can escape the divine judgment. "Cursed be he that setteth light by father or mother," saith the Lord. Deut. 27, 16. "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out and the young eagles shall eat it." Prov. 30, 17. On the other hand, the promise of the Lord is that obedience shall bring blessing, and the word of the Lord shall never fail. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right. Honor thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." Eph. 6, 1–3. The mercy of the Lord is great to them that fear Him, and His blessings shall be upon them all their days.

Children, learn from the example of Jesus to be subject to your parents, and follow not the multitude to do evil. When ill-trained or untrained boys and girls sneer at you for your ready obedience, think of the holy Child and how He was subject. This is written for our learning. Walk in His ways. And that you may be able to do this give earnest heed to His word. May His Spirit give you obedient hearts and keep you in blessed communion with Him, into whom you have been baptized. Let the same

mind be in you which was also in Christ, and He will keep you from all evil.

Dear brethren, these are important lessons which are taught us in the only account that we have of the youth of our Lord. Take them seriously to heart, and ponder them when you return to your homes and read again the gospel for the day. Bring your children to the Lord in holy baptism, and bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, that they may early learn to serve Him and worship Him in the congregation of His saints. Trust in this Lord, who came to teach us the things which belong to our peace and to lay down His life as a sacrifice for our sins. He is the Lord from heaven, who is our mighty Savior. And as He was constantly about His Father's business, He gave us an example how to serve God in this earthly life. Let us follow it, doing the work with our might which He has given us to do, looking to Him for prosperity and blessing, that we and our children may be found serving the Lord. Thus will He be all to us, our Deliverer from death, and our Guide through all this earthly life to the life eternal in the heavens. Amen.

Second Sunday after Epiphany.

JOHN 2, 1–11.

And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: and both Jesus was called, and His disciples, to the marriage. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto Him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it. And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And He saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, and saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him.

Dear Brethren:

In the time of our Savior's visible sojourn on earth there were marriages and wedding feasts among the Jews much as there are at present among us. The celebration of a marriage was a time of joy, and there were festivities, often prolonged for days, in honor of the happy event. To such a wedding feast our Lord and His disciples were invited at Cana. Melancholy Christians of gloomy habit, who question whether it is not a sin to smile in such a world of sorrow where millions are perishing, would expect Him to decline any such invitation, and some are astonished that the narration does not even give intimations of

any hesitation or any reluctance in accepting it. But the record presents this as a matter of course. The Savior and His friends were called, and accordingly they were there. What had Jesus to do at such a place of feasting and gladness? We shall answer the question by showing

WHAT JESUS DOES AT THE MARRIAGE IN CANA.

1. *He honors marriage;* 2. *He exercises His love;* 3. *He manifests His glory;* 4. *He strengthens the faith of His disciples.* May the Lord direct us to right understanding of His gracious deed and His glorious epiphany!

1. *He honors marriage.* Accepting the invitation to the feast and gracing it by His presence, He reverences the divine institution which many disparage and some despise, but which God declares to be "honorable in all," Heb. 13, 4.

You know that there are even among Christians many who represent unmarried persons as purer and holier than those who are married. Although they do not absolutely forbid marriage as a sinful state, inasmuch as it is plain that the purpose of God in the government of this world implies it as necessary to "multiply and replenish the earth," yet they manifestly regard it as a sort of necessary evil, which the more advanced in holiness must avoid. Hence they forbid marriage to those who would attain higher grades of spirituality, and we have as a consequence the celibacy of the priesthood, and the whole system of monasticism. This comes of disregarding the divine ordinance, and following human reason and feeling in matters of divine appointment and order. Hence "the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having

their conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth." 1 Tim. 4, 1–3. And those who have been led astray by these seducing spirits are people who even profess to be the true and only Church of Him who went to the marriage at Cana and honored matrimony by performing His first miracle at a wedding. You see, brethren, how important it is that we always keep the word of God before us, lest we be deceived. "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled," and Rome only shows how far it has strayed from the ways of the Lord in its condemnation of that which He commends.

Marriage is not a consequence of the sin that has entered into the world and destroyed its peace. Before the tempter had succeeded in his dreadful work, it had been declared by the Creator and Governor of all: "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." Gen. 2, 18. Before the fall had taken place the record is made: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh." Gen. 2, 24. Marriage is God's beneficent institution to secure ends well pleasing in His sight and beneficial to His creature. It is therefore not to be shunned as something impure, but to be sought as in accord with the divine will and human happiness. But it must be sanctified with the Word of God and prayer. An act so important as that of forming a union for life, on which the happiness of one's whole earthly pilgrimage so largely depends, should not be formed inconsiderately, should not be formed without Him, from whom all blessings flow. It is commanded: "Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." Col. 3, 17. Especially should this be heeded

in the things which are so momentous as that of marriage. Let the Lord Jesus be invited to the wedding; the neglect of this is the neglect of the things which belong to our peace. And He will come, and will be the bearer of blessings to you, and will consecrate your home, however humble that may be, as a house of the Lord, in which He will dwell with you and where His peace shall reign. The Lord Jesus honored marriage by going to the wedding at Cana, and thus assures us that He is pleased when His people marry, and on their invitation will come to their wedding and bless them.

2. *He shows His love.* "When they wanted wine the mother of Jesus saith unto Him, They have no wine." His reply to His mother was apparently not as mild and affectionate as would be expected. He saith unto her, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come." But the words do not contain the harsh rebuff which our translation might suggest. They simply inform Mary, in no ungentle way, that matters pertaining to His office and work are not under her direction, and that His time for showing His power and extending His help had not yet come. But when the time came His assistance was ready. "There were there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And He saith unto them draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast." The wine that was lacking was thus supplied in abundant quantity and in excellent quality. Thus our Lord showed His love in supplying not only what was necessary for sustenance, but also what, though a luxury, was appropriate and desirable at the wedding feast, notwithstanding the abuse to which it is often subjected.

The Lord is the giver of all good, and we can con-

fidently trust in Him, that in His boundless love He will leave no want unsupplied. He has made us and preserved us, and daily gives us what is needed to sustain us. "He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life," and He does this "purely out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me." Not only does every good gift come from Him, as it is written: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning," (James 1, 17.) but He is pleased to hear our petitions for supplies and has promised that our supplications should never be presented in vain. "The eyes of all wait upon Thee, and Thou givest them their meat in due season; Thou openest Thine hand and satisfiest the desire of every living thing." "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth." Ps. 145, 15–18. Therefore we are taught to trust in Him, who is a very present help, and to be assured that He is our Shepherd and will not permit us to want. He will give us our daily bread, as He has taught us to ask and as He has promised to hear.

But our Lord's miracle at the wedding in Cana shows that His care for us is not confined to the necessaries of life. He relieves not only of the distress which comes from the want of that which is indispensable. He pities us also in the lesser cares and perplexities of life, and relieves us of embarrassments that are not dangerous to body or soul, but that notwithstanding are pressing and painful. The wine gave out at the wedding. That was not a serious matter. The guests could get along without it; the host could not be punished for the defect as if it were a crime. And yet to the givers of the feast it was not a mere trifle. It was mortifying; and whether there was really reason for suffering pain on account of it or not,

the pain was real. Our Savior has sympathy with us in all our troubles, and we need not fear that any of them will seem too trivial in His eye to grant relief. He shows His love in supplying the wine which was needed in accordance with the custom of the time, and the failure of which was a cause of grief. So He will help us always, and we can pour out our hearts before Him, assured that for every wound He has a balm.

The supply of wine, when this failed at the feast, does not imply any sanction of excess in its use or abatement of the law in regard to temperance. Our Lord is Himself the Lawgiver, and requires of men to "walk honestly, as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying." Rom. 13, 13. He tells us plainly that the drunkard shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. But His miracle does indicate that those are in error who pronounce it a sin to drink wine under any circumstances, and that even those have not understood our Lord who regard none but a medical use allowable. It was used at the feast as a means of enjoyment, and our Lord approved such use, without in any sense giving any encouragement to intemperance. He employed it in accordance with the word: "Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." 1 Tim. 4, 4. 5. It is very sad that many of those even who profess to be followers of this loving Savior are wise in their own conceits and think that they know better what is right and what is profitable for man than the Lord Himself, and who therefore either torture His words into a meaning which they do not contain, or find fault with Him and His miracle of turning water into wine. Poor humanity! "John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man glutton-

ous and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." Matt. 11, 18. 19. Dear brethren, let us learn to know our Savior better in His exercise of love at Cana, and trust that love to supply us with the necessaries and comforts of life, giving thanks always for His goodness which blesses us so richly.

3. *He manifests His glory.* "The conscious water saw its God and blushed," says an old English poet beautifully. The miracle by which water was turned into wine showed that Jesus is the Christ and that Christ is God. His divine glory beamed forth in the performance of the divine work.

It is true, not every marvelous deed must be referred to Deity. There are many things in nature that transcend our comprehension and therefore excite our wonder. They are marvelous in our eyes. Human learning has not yet scaled the heights and fathomed the depths of creation, and has not yet traced all its varied operations to their causes. Notwithstanding all our progress, there are still many things in heaven and earth of which our philosophy has not dreamed. And that which is not understood, though it might be accounted for by natural causes, if these were only known, must seem to our ignorance wonderful. Some may have discovered powers which remain unknown to the people generally, and seem workers of wonders to their fellow men. It would be false to ascribe all that is inexplicable to supernatural power. And even when the wonder wrought actually does proceed from powers that are not imbedded in nature, it does not follow that they are divine. There are satanic as well as divine forces, and these satanic forces are not infrequently excited. When the magicians of Egypt produced results by their enchantments similar to those wrought by the hand of God through Moses, their wonderful works did not prove them servants of God. They were evidently

servants of sin in league with the devil to counteract the work and thwart the purpose of God. There are counterfeit as well as real miracles, so that we would go sadly astray if we assumed that every wonderful work proves the divinity of the worker. There are lying wonders, and we must be careful not to be deceived and misled by them. Nay, more. Not every real miracle proves that he who works it is divine. The mighty works of prophets and apostles, performed by supernatural power in the service of truth and righteousness, attested their divine mission. But they were not God, and no one had reason, because of their miracles, to presume that they were God. These miracles were merely credentials of their divine mission, and glorified the Master, not the servant.

It was otherwise in the case of our Lord and His miracles. The evangelist expressly says: "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory." The work displayed a power that is not in nature, and could not be traced to any natural cause. It was done in the exercise of a love that is not found in hell and the hosts that inhabit that dark abode of hatred and despair. It was done in virtue of a power for good that lay in the doer Himself, and not in virtue of a borrowed power that would manifest the glory of another. In the consciousness of a power that is divine and that all the forces of nature must obey, He gives His orders to fill the waterpots, to draw out, and to bear to the governor of the feast. And the result is no surprise to Him: He willed that it should be wine, and good wine it was to supply the need. He is the Lord of nature, and nature must obey. His glory as the Lord of all was manifested in the ready obedience of the creature. He walked among men like other men; but He who as a man was among the wedding guests and whose mother called His attention to the lack of wine, was the Lord from heaven. The only

begotten Son, begotten of the Father from eternity, had assumed human nature and was born of the virgin—made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law. But He was still Lord of all. Even as a man, His humanity being united to His divinity in one undivided person, He was Lord of all. He walked in lowliness, indeed. "Being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death." The natural eye would not see the Majesty which belonged to the Son of Mary—belonged to Him because He was the Son of God, His human nature sharing in the Majesty of the Eternal Son. But that which the eye could not see was ever present in the mighty Savior. He still reigned in heaven during His humiliation on earth, and at times the majesty would break forth which was generally concealed. Here, as in His miracles generally, the Lord of creation displayed His power. He manifested forth His glory.

4. And another thing He did at this wedding. *He established and strengthened the faith of His disciples.* The manifestation of His glory rooted them in the faith, the trial of that faith gave it new vigor and power. The narrative of our Lord's miracle closes with the remark: "And His disciples believed on Him."

When they wanted wine at the feast and the mother of Jesus reminded Him of the want, He said, "Mine hour is not yet come." The time had come when man thought help was immediately necessary. But man's thoughts are not God's thoughts. The time had not yet come when help must be given; when the proper time should come, it would not fail. The mother of Jesus as well as the rest of the wedding party must wait until the Savior's hour had come. This trial they must all abide. How well they endured it is seen from her words to the servants, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." She knew assuredly

that in due time relief from embarrassment would be granted. And such trial endured makes strong for greater endurance and fiercer conflicts. So we must still pass through a wilderness of probation under the direction of the same Lord, "that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. 1 Pet. 1, 7. Exercise makes strong.

But it is especially the manifestation of His glory that serves to strengthen their faith. The record reads as if the disciples had not believed in Him before the miracle at the marriage, as if this had brought them to faith. But it does not explicitly say that, and in view of what is said about the disciples before, and also of the fact that they were His disciples, whatever may have been their weaknesses, it does not imply that. But they received such an enlargement of their knowledge and such a confirmation of their confidence in Jesus as the Messiah, and in the Messiah as not only very man, but also very God, that it seemed as if all things had become new and they had but now begun to believe in the Lamb of God. There was in this miracle such an epiphany of His majesty, such a manifestation of His glory, that lingering doubts were driven away and the hearts of the disciples were glad in the presence of their God, who was not only their very present help in trouble, but their strength and their Redeemer. They now saw in Him their Lord and their God who hath visited and redeemed His people, and rejoiced in the consolation of Israel. They believed in Him as they had not believed in Him before, because their faith received a strength which it did not possess before.

We have thus heard an answer to the question as to what Jesus had to do at the wedding. He honored marriage; He showed His love; He manifested His glory;

He brought His disciples to a stronger faith. And these things are written for our learning, that we should not despise the divine ordinance which He honored; that we should trust in that love which is ever ready to help in distress; that we should adore that majesty and glory which He manifested by turning water into wine; and that we should believe in Him, who is still present with His people every day, and who is the Messiah mighty to save now as He was then.

Dear brethren, let this Savior be with you in forming marriage bonds, and let Him abide with you in your homes, that in every perplexity and in every embarrassment you may have the Friend near who is able and willing to help. Let Him be your Guide throughout your lives, and at last bring you to the heavenly mansions which He has prepared for you. For to this end did He come into the world that He might give us salvation. Trust in Him, keep close by His side: He will bless you in time and receive you to glory. Amen.

Third Sunday after Epiphany.

MATT. 8, 1–13.

When He was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. And, behold, there came a leper and worshiped Him, saying, Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto Him a centurion, beseeching Him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard it, He marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour.

Beloved in Christ:

Our Lord "manifested forth His glory" by the wonderful works which He performed during His lowly sojourn on earth, as well as by the gracious words which He spake. This is designed to be exhibited in the Epiphany lessons. His miracles displayed His divine power, and were intended to draw people's attention to Him, that they might hear His words, which are spirit and life, and believe on

His name. The purpose of His coming into the world, and therefore of all His deeds and sufferings, His works and words, was to save the lost. But as salvation can be appropriated only by faith, all His teaching was directed to this as its end. Our life becomes a blessed one by faith—our goal is attained by faith. The whole redeeming work of our Savior and the whole benefit of the Gospel is unavailing to those who do not believe. Concerning this needful work of grace in the souls of men our text gives us precious instruction. To this let me call your devout attention; namely,

FAITH IN THE REDEEMER.

We shall consider 1. *Its necessity;* 2. *Its marks;* and 3. *Its blessing*. Lord, make us diligent hearers of Thy Word, that it may be mixed with faith in them that hear it!

I. The necessity of faith is shown in our text in the blessing which it was the means of securing by the leper and the centurion, and in our Lord's declaration that the children of the kingdom, who did not believe in Him, should be cast into outer darkness, while many from heathen lands, who did believe, should sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. This is what the Scriptures constantly teach.

1. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." Heb. 11, 6. To this there is no exception. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Mark 16, 16. The plans and schemes of Jews and Gentiles to obtain salvation without faith are alike futile.

The Jews hoped in vain for salvation without faith in Jesus. They had the promise indeed; but the promise made to faithful Abraham and his seed by no means ren-

dered them heirs of heaven in virtue of their natural birth. The promise was to faith; that alone could appropriate it; and the hope to attain it without this was never given by the Scriptures. This St. Paul clearly stated in his sermon at Antioch, as recorded in the Acts, where he says: "We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that He hath raised up Jesus again. . . . By Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." Acts 13, 32 and 39. Thus the same apostle says to the Galatians 3, 13. 14: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." The blessings depend on Christ's bearing the curse for us, and they are inherited only by faith. Therefore our Lord said, when the Jews boasted of having Abraham for their father: "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham." John 8, 40. And again St. Paul says: "They are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children; but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." Rom. 9, 6. 7. So it is plain that the Jews had no reason to hope for salvation merely because they were the descendants of Abraham according to the flesh, and that the promise was always by faith, as St. Paul says again: "The Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." Rom. 3, 22.

But the Scriptures also teach that the Jews who do

not believe are rejected. They teach that all hopes of heaven without faith in Christ are futile; that unbelief has, as a certain consequence, damnation in its train: and this not only in the case of the Gentiles, but also of the Jews. For our Lord says: "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Matt. 21, 43. And St. Paul says; "Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling-stone; as it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling-stone, and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth in Him shall not be ashamed." Rom. 9, 31–3. Therefore our Lord says in the text: "I say unto you that many shall come from the east and the west and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

And just as vainly as the Jews do others endeavor to attain it without faith in Jesus. When men strive to reach it by superior holiness, their labor is lost. Who can say that he is without sin—that he has attained to that perfect holiness which the law requires? Only ignorance or self-conceit could be so presumptuous. The Bible teaches that "as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." This surely cannot mean less than that we are all sinners. But how can any one in such a situation flatter himself that the law's condemnation will not reach him? How can any one dream of escaping the wrath to come and attaining the crown of unfading glory, while thus an alien from God? But man can amend, it will be said; he can strive after holiness, as he is bound to do; and striving faithfully he may obtain the reward. This seems

very plausible; salvation in such a way seems practicable to human reason; and yet it is a mere delusion of Satan, who uses our natural pride as a means to make his lies acceptable. Have ye not read in the Scriptures what our Savior says about our performances? He says, "When ye have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do." Luke 17, 10. Because in the best case we can do only what we are bound to do at any rate, and can therefore claim no reward for doing it, all hopes of salvation by works are vain, as the Jews' hope of salvation by their carnal descent from Abraham, to whom the promise was given, is vain. "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for the just shall live by faith."

But if men cannot attain to the perfect, sinless holiness which the law requires, and therefore cannot in this way attain to heaven, may they not obtain forgiveness of their short-comings and transgressions, and thus still have everlasting life without faith? This again may seem a very plausible plan. It looks as though no possible objection could be urged against it, inasmuch as God is surely always willing to pardon, and when pardon is received nothing more can be wanting: for where there is remission of sins there of course is also life and salvation. And yet this is but a refuge of lies. For when God has once denounced punishment upon sin, how can He forgive it without an atonement? Would not a parent be guilty of falsehood if he threatened punishment and then let the fault go unpunished? Would not Jehovah's word be broken if men could sin with impunity? Therefore a Savior was needed, who should be a ransom for us—who should

take the punishment of all men's sins upon Himself: and thus, and only thus, there is or can be forgiveness. Therefore the Scriptures say: "Without shedding of blood there is no remission," Heb. 9, 22, because "the wages of sin is death;" and again: "To Him (Jesus) give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." Acts 10, 43. Thus without faith we cannot please God now, as little as the leper and centurion of our text could have pleased God without it.

2. As without faith none, so with faith all can please God. "With God there is no respect of persons." Rom. 2, 11. The Jewish leper and the heathen centurion are alike acceptable when they come with believing hearts.

God has promised salvation to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews. For although it was part of God's plan to have the Gospel made known first to the Jews, yet it never belonged to that plan to reject the Gentiles and give them no opportunity of obtaining salvation. The Jews indeed supposed the Gentiles to be shut out; even the apostles for a while thought that the only way for Gentiles to be saved was by becoming Jews. But this error was soon removed from their minds; and we find St. Peter saying with regard to heathens: "Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as He did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I that I could withstand God? When they heard these things they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also unto the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." Acts 11, 17. 18. And this was of course no change in the original plan of the unchangeable Jehovah. It had been so foretold by prophets under the old covenant; for example, by Haggai, where the Lord says: "I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come." Hag. 2, 7. Christianity is for all people. It is not for a particular nation or

color or time or tongue, but for all nations and all time. This is the assurance which gives vigor to our missionary operations; for we know that we are sending out a Gospel which is just as much for those poor, benighted heathen souls, as it is for us. We know—surely we have not yet forgotten it!—what the angel says in the beautiful Gospel for Christmas day: "I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to *all* people." This encourages us to pay and to contribute for the spread of the Gospel further and further still, until the glorious truth shall be known in every land.

"Till like a sea of glory
It spread from pole to pole."

Let us think of it seriously that salvation is really for the Gentiles as well as for us, and surely, Christian hearts will pray and Christian hands give more for missions!

And as it is for all, it is of course for the worst and weakest among us, as well as for the best and the strongest. You have no doubt heard of persons who deemed themselves too vile, too wicked, to be received by our dear Savior. Some of you have perhaps had seasons when you felt too vile, too wicked yourselves to be accepted as the Holy One's brethren. It is natural that men should think so, when the extent and heinousness of their sins are once fully and clearly revealed to their eyes. Then comfort is needed which man cannot give—consolation which can come only from Him, against whom all our offences are committed. But this comfort fails not. Why, if a poor leper, whose loathsome disease rendered him an outcast from all society, and who was required to warn all persons away by his cry of "Unclean!" found a sympathizing friend in Jesus, who healed him of his leprosy, we have good hope that He will hear and heed us also when, in our moral leprosy, we cry to Him. And the Scriptures

assure us that He will. Of course, not while we approve of and go on in wickedness: while we do this we never sincerely wish to come to Him for healing, or ask Him to lay His hand upon us and bless us. But when we desire release from Satan's galling chains and ask deliverance, we never ask in vain: no degree of wickedness preceding this will deprive us of the blessing. "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." Is. 55, 6–7. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Isai. 1, 18. We need not therefore fear that we shall be rejected, though we feel deeply our unworthiness and sin; we need not fear that He will despise our cry, who bids us come to Him. Always should we remember for our encouragement the words of the apostle: "It is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ died to save sinners, of whom I am chief." Let the chief of sinners come, and Christ will cleanse him.

II. Our text presents some of the prominent characteristics of faith, to which it will be profitable for us to attend.

1. As the first of these I mention deep humility.—The leper does not presume to prescribe to the Lord what should be done; he meekly presents himself to God, and relies on His great mercy for the rest, merely expressing this desire to be healed of his disease, but leaving all else to the Master. Therefore he worshiped and said: "If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." This is far from that self-confident, irreverent conduct which we sometimes observe among men and which betokens rather a want of faith and a large stock of pride, than any true Christian

life. Faith is never boastful, never arrogant, never presumptuous; it never thinks that blessings are due us; but renders us conscious of our demerit, and relies wholly on that sovereign mercy which grants us gifts above all we are able to ask or think. This is still clearer in the case of the centurion. "The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof." Here is an expression of utter unworthiness to obtain the help implored. It would be a great honor indeed to have the mighty Savior come to him; but he felt how great must be the Savior's condescension to visit one so unworthy—one who had no claims whatever upon His mercy. And so true faith ever makes us feel. We are so unworthy, and yet He condescends to help us; we have deserved nothing, and yet He gives so much. Let us learn one important feature of faith here, and in its light let us examine ourselves, whether we be in the faith.

2. But to faith belongs also unwavering confidence. —"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Heb. 11, 1. How well this is exemplified in our lesson! The leper came worshiping and said: "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." There is here no wavering whatever: not the least appearance of doubt in the divine power and mercy. Whatever else might seem to him questionable, this was to him beyond all question, that Jesus could heal if He would, implying too that Jesus would exercise His power, if this were best. There is here a total absence of that questioning and reasoning with which we often meet among men but which indicates a want of confidence in the divine Word. The leper shows confidence in the Lord and the help was immediate.

But this confidence is still more marked in the conduct of the centurion. "Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed." Here was in a Gentile a trust

which puts to shame many a Christian who deems himself strong: trust not only in the great power of Jesus, by which He could perform whatsoever He chose, but also in His wonder-working word. "Speak the word only"—for the word is the power of God! And as though he would encourage himself to hold fast this confidence, he observes how his word is followed by important consequences; how he speaks to the soldiers under him, and that which he commands is done: how much more should not the word of the Lord accomplish that whereunto He sent it! No wonder the Savior praised the centurion's faith; for it was as intelligent as it was firm.

Let us learn to trust our Savior's power and mercy more: let us lean upon that word which cannot but accomplish that whereunto it is sent; and if often we cannot see how, let us remember the other characteristic of faith presented in our text, namely humility, and in the exercise of this be content that God knows how, and will perform it. Then we will also be ready to attend to the third mark of faith shown us here.

3. That third mark is unquestioning obedience.—When the Lord speaks we should hear and obey. We need no further reason for this than that the Lord hath spoken. The leper was required to go, as the law commanded in the case of a healed leper, and show himself to the priest and offer the requisite gift. This was to be done for a testimony unto them, that it might not be successfully denied that Jesus healed the leper. On this account probably the cleansed person was to keep silence, that it might not be said that Jesus transgressed or taught others to transgress the Levitical law.—So we are commanded to live righteously and godly and soberly, when once through faith we have received the remission of sins; and the great mercy shown us is to influence our hearts to immediate obedience as far as it lies in our power. But

just as the leper was not to be healed by the obedience required, but was healed before, so we are not to receive our healing by obedience to the law, but after having been healed are to work. Our obedience is a result of faith, and is unquestioning because we believe.

III. Finally, we learn from our text the blessings attendant upon this faith, which we have seen to be so necessary, and which is so humble, so confident, and so obedient.

1. It acquires what it desires. Jesus put forth His hand and touched the leper, whose believing petition had been laid before Him, and said: "I will; be thou clean!" How could it be otherwise in view of the leper's faith and the distinct divine promises, assuring us that whatsoever we ask in faith we should receive? So to the centurion He replied, even before the deep humility was expressed in words: "I will come and heal him." And after the centurion had entreated that the word might merely be spoken, in which word he would trust, though he did not see its operation immediately, Jesus said to him: "As thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee!" What a power is faith, holding to the Almighty Savior! Nothing can be denied to the believer asking in faith. Even as thou believest, so be it unto thee! It is so yet. In temporal things we need but cling to the word of promise, and as we believe so shall it be—so must it be! So too in spiritual things: believe, and thou hast what God's Word declares. For it must be remembered that faith always clings to the divine Word; that we cannot be properly said to believe what is not promised in the Word, as only that is an object of faith; and that, as we believe the Word, so it must be fulfilled toward us and in us. Therefore we believe; and even as we believe, so must it be. Faith acquires what it desires: blessed be God!

2. Faith has consolation in every trouble. The believer always brings his troubles to the Lord, the great Helper in every time of need. Like the leper he worships and entreats. If Thou wilt, Lord, Thou canst help me. Like the centurion he goes and tells the Lord his trouble. And like the leper and the centurion, he has no sooner asked than comfort is bestowed. If it seem not good to our dear Lord at once to remove the burden, beneath whose pressure we groan, He removes it in His own good time, and meantime gives us strength to bear. For to relieve us of a burden there are two ways: either to diminish the weight, so that there may be less for us to bear, or to increase our strength, so that we can more easily bear it. And help in some way the Lord will afford, for He has promised to do this. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Let us therefore not repine, not grieve as those without hope. Despair can enter only where faith has disappeared. Let us put our trust in God. Let us not seek help with man, for in spiritual matters especially his help is vain; but let us look to God for help, and believing we shall find consolation: for He is ever ready to help, and faith knows it, enjoys it, being helped in the self-same hour.

3. Finally, faith lays hold of eternal life. Our soul's salvation is the end and object of our faith. It clings to God's promises and is comforted and blessed in the trials and troubles of this life; but this is not the greatest boon it gives: it clings to God's promises and has comfort in view of eternity. For "being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. 5, 1. God sent His Son to die for us; all our sins were laid upon Him; He bare them all on the cross; there is full atonement made for all; He tasted death for every man. And now the Gospel is preached of the free remis-

sion of sins: do you believe it? He that believes has what the Word declares, even the forgiveness of sins—hath everlasting life, which is the end of our faith. Let us then do as the leper and the centurion did, come trustingly to Jesus, and we shall be blessed as the leper and centurion were blest — blest in time, blest in eternity. Amen.

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany.

MATT. 8, 23–27.

And when He was entered into a ship, His disciples followed Him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves; but He was asleep. And His disciples came to Him, and awoke Him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And He saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then He arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him!

Dear Brethren:

Our gospel records another epiphany of our Redeemer's glory. It tells us how His power was manifested over nature. He is God over all, and therefore the winds and the sea obey Him. He made them all: how should they fail to own His supremacy? He turns the water to wine, He bids the leprosy and the palsy depart, He commands the storm to be quiet, and all are submissive to their Master's word. And that Master is among us, healing spiritual diseases and bidding our hearts be still. The same Lord who was with His disciples in the ship when the great tempest arose on the sea of Galilee and who bade the winds be still, has the same power now and is ready to exercise it in our behalf. But the littleness of faith which He rebukes is also still to be found, and the lesson of our text is therefore needful for us. Let us consider, then,

THE CHRISTIAN IN THE STORM,

Directing our attention to these two topics: 1. *How Storms come,* 2. *How help comes;* and may the Lord bless our meditations for our comfort!

I. *How storms come* in temporal and in spiritual affairs, notwithstanding the presence of Christ, nay, how they sometimes come even because of the presence of Christ, the experience of Christians has amply shown; and the Word of God gives us sufficient light to enable us to understand their causes and their uses.

1. Why storms come in the material world, with their terror and disaster, can be understood only when that calamity in Eden is taken into account of which the Scriptures alone give us any information. That something has gone wrong in creation is manifest in the sighing of the winds and the moaning of the waters and the groaning of the animals, as well as in the unrest and pain of the human race; but whence the evil comes we cannot gather from nature. He who made all things pronounced them good, and the storm that brings destruction of property and lives, on land and sea, no more belongs to the things that are good than does pain or disease. They may be used for good ends; they often are overruled for good by the merciful providence of God; but they are not to be classed with the creatures of God, all of which are good. They are evils which sin has brought in its train. Not only were Adam and Eve cursed when they ate the forbidden fruit, but the whole creation shared in the calamity. "Cursed is the ground for thy sake," saith the Lord to Adam; "in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee." Gen. 3, 17. 18. Hence it is written: "The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain

together until now." Rom. 8, 19–22. The consequences of the fall extended over all nature.

> "Earth felt the wound, and nature from her seat,
> Sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe,
> That all was lost."

But if the tempests that strike terror to human souls, because they threaten disaster and death, are traceable to sin, which is separation from God and the ground of all dissolution, as their source, the troubles that come upon our souls, the storms that toss our hearts, are so much more surely to be referred to that cause, as they are of a spiritual nature, and therefore more akin to the spiritual evil which brought death into the world and all our woe. The griefs which bow down the heart, the sorrowfulness which is so often even unto death, could not be ours, if we had not ceased to be God's. Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward, not because God has delight in His creature's pain and created him so that he must encounter it and suffer it, but because he departed from the ways of the Lord and entered upon the course that ends in death. Our life is now but a gradual dying; the doom of death is on us, and step by step, through disease and infirmity and disaster, it is reached. Storms come to shake the earth and shake our souls, because sin has come.

2. From these storms we are not exempt because Christ is with us. Some do imagine, but they imagine it without reason, that since Christ has come to destroy the works of the devil and to deliver us from sin, and that since suffering and sorrowing are a result of sin and therefore a work of Satan that is to be destroyed, those who have come to Jesus must be exempt from them. Their own experience should suffice to reprove their error. They have forgiveness of sin, but that does not imply exemption from all the consequences which sin brings with it in

this world. The disorder that has been introduced by it into nature is not healed when the individual is delivered from the eternal death which is the ultimate result of its unhindered working in the soul. It cannot work death in the believer, who is in Christ Jesus, and therefore has the life which the Savior gives and over which death has no power. But this does not imply that the believer shall have no pain and sickness, no suffering and bodily death. On the contrary, these are natural evils which remain notwithstanding the spiritual healing, and the Christian must endure them as well as the unbeliever. The existence of the Christian Church on earth does not prevent cyclones and earthquakes, and the faith of the individual does not prevent headaches and heartaches. All these evils will eventually be overcome; and there shall be no more suffering when the full purpose of the kingdom of God is accomplished; but that is not now and shall not be until the final consummation. Hence the Scriptures warn Christians that they too must pass through storms. Our Lord says: "These things have I spoken unto you that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." John 16, 33. Hence Paul and Barnabas exhorted the disciples "to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." Acts 14, 22. And the Lord is spoken of as the refuge of His people from the storms of earth. "Thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall." Isa. 25, 4. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, though the waters

thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." Ps. 46, 1–3. Christians have a present help when the storms howl around them, but they are not exempt from the storms.

3. Nay, the tempest sometimes rages furiously just because Christ is in the ship. There are afflictions that come upon us because we are disciples of Jesus. Satan is the bitter enemy of all those who are on the Lord's side, and he exercises his malice to the utmost of his power. For those who confess Christ declare against the devil, and as they war against him and his kingdom of darkness, he wars against them. That is natural. Therefore the apostle admonishes: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world." 1 Pet. 5, 8. 9. This bitter foe of man, who is especially embittered against Christ and Christians, uses even the powers of nature, in earthquake shocks and ocean storms, to terrify and destroy the human race, and it is only because the Almighty curbs his malice and murder that destruction is not dealt out in larger and more terrible measures. But Satan is not almighty, and the Omnipotent fixes bounds to his wrath, as He does to the forces of nature, saying "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." Job 38, 11. And as Satan exerts all his power to alarm and injure the people of God, he does not fail to arouse the wicked against them and make them the instruments of his persecution. Therefore Christians especially are exposed to afflictions. They are assaulted as the men of the world are not. Their confession is an offence to the proud heads and hearts of men, and even their daily life of love and devotion is a rebuke to the world that lieth in wickedness. Therefore the world

is hostile to Christians and excites storms of persecution. "If the world hate you," says the Lord, "ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; if they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." John 15, 18–20. The disciples of Jesus must therefore expect such storms just because they are disciples, and must not think it strange when the winds are high and the heat is great. "They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you because they have not known the Father nor me." John 16, 2. 3. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you, but rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." 1 Pet. 4, 12. 13. In the times of the apostles, and in all the ages since, the followers of Christ were persecuted. Through faith they "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again; and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented: of whom the world was not worthy." Heb. 11, 33–38. In all the

centuries the word of the apostle has been fulfilled: "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." 2 Tim. 3, 12. Believers must pass through storms to the land of rest.

II. The Christian is tried in the storm, but not destroyed. He is only driven to the Lord, who is a very present help in trouble and who bids the winds and the sea be still. Help comes, but it comes only when we seek refuge in the Lord. He tries us in the storm and makes the storm a blessing; He delivers from its fury and makes a calm.

1. The Lord tries us in the storm and through the trial blesses us. And this trial is twofold. We are tried by the storms which howl around us; we are tried by the seeming indifference of our Lord, who appears to lie asleep while destruction is threatening us.

In the first place, the afflictions which come upon us are a trial to our faith, and serve to drive us for help to the only Helper in trouble. "Behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves, but He was asleep. And His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, Lord, save us; we perish." The trial is often severe, but it serves to render our Lord's disciples conscious of their weakness and helplessness, and to induce them to flee for refuge to their only help, and to cry to Him for succor and deliverance. The trial is often severe; for it does not appear to our natural understanding how the afflictions which we must suffer and the persecutions through which we must pass can be conducive to our Lord's merciful ends, or in any way contribute to our peace and happiness. That is because our knowledge is so limited and our reasoning is so hampered by ignorance. Even the thunderstorm to some minds seems an unmitigated evil, as do the rains when their plans require fair weather. Nor is it to be denied

that the workings of nature in fire and flood, in storm and pestilence, are a consequence of sin. It is not wrong therefore to see evils in that which brings death and destruction. But it is wrong to forget that God is guiding the ship in the storm, and to imagine that because the tempest is furious there can be no blessing in the storm and no rescue from its fury. A strong faith, that fully trusts the Lord, who hath power over all things and rules in wisdom and in mercy over all, will feel secure amid the heavings of the sea and the rumblings of the thunder, because it is sure from the Word that the Lord is doing all things well and making all things work together for good to them that love Him. Such a faith embraces the promise of the Almighty's protection, and feels secure because the assurance of security is given it. "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress, my God; in Him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler and from the noisome pestilence." Ps. 91, 2. 3. But such strength of faith as places full reliance in the mercy and power of God, who protects us and guards us and directs us and guides us, is not every man's gift; it is not every Christian's gift. The most of us, not by reason of the lack of divine mercy, but by reason of our own lack of earnest devotion, are in the condition of the disciples in our text, who cry out, "We perish." Even when there is commotion in nature, and there is storm on land or sea, we are fearful that our lives cannot be preserved, and are prone to despair of deliverance because the tempest is high. More still is this the case where sufferings come and especially when persecutions must be borne. Then reason is so apt to inquire why those who follow Jesus should be oppressed and should be made to pursue their way in sorrow, while so many who reject Him have joy and fare sumptuously every day. And many are thus offended in Him who ought to be His bold and joyful fol-

lowers through storms as well as in sunshine. Such bitterness of faith shows itself as much in those who profess great devotion as in those who are modest and show but little confidence in themselves. Nay, we must say more. Such littleness of faith is much more likely to manifest itself where there has been bold and boastful confidence expressed than where there has been timid and humble distrust of self. The more we think our strength sufficient for the storm, the sooner will the soul be terrified when the storm comes and its power threatens destruction. "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" The Lord that made all things, is the Master of all, and He is your Protector. Make the Lord, which is thy refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation, and there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall there any plague come nigh thy dwelling. And all the storms of trouble shall only contribute so much towards bringing you nearer the goal of everlasting happiness. "For our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." 2 Cor. 4, 17. 18. God means to bless us through the storms which we dread, showing us our inability to defend ourselves against the powers that threaten to injure us, and calling us thus to come to Him, as the disciples cried to Him for help, that we may have the greater blessing because of our probation, as the apostle writes: "Now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried by fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." 1 Pet. 1, 6. 7.

Secondly, when we come to Jesus with our cry for help, He does not always immediately respond and grant

us deliverance. He seems to be asleep. The trial is increased by the delay of relief. It seems as if God were indifferent to our call and had forsaken us. The sea is heavy and no small tempest is upon us, and our Lord in whom we trust is asleep and heeds not our distress. It is a trial to which He frequently subjects His disciples, so that they with the psalmist raise the complaint: "Will the Lord cast off for ever, and will He be favorable no more? Is His mercy clean gone for ever? Doth His promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies?" Ps. 77, 7–9. The gracious Lord would have His people freed from all reliance upon supports that in the time of need will always fail, and would lead them to trust in Him, who is an ever present and an ever certain help. The little delay makes it no less trustworthy and no less sure. When He has taught the soul that it must not lean on an arm of flesh or on a broken reed, and that every earthly refuge is vain, so that nothing remains but what is compressed in the cry of anguish, "We perish," His help is ready, and it is never too late. Hence believing souls can have confidence even amid the storm, though neither sun nor stars appear for many days, and can say with the singer: "I will say unto God my rock, Why hast Thou forgotten me? Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? As with a sword in my bones mine enemies reproach me, while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God? Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God." Ps. 42, 9–11. The soul abides the trial and is blessed when it does not permit itself to be driven away from the Lord, but is impelled only the more earnestly and importunately to cry for help. All the trial, including that of delay in delivering from trouble, is an instrument of

blessing to the believer, that his little faith may become stronger. "We glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed." Rom. 5, 3–5.

2. In due time the deliverance comes. The Lord not only makes the storm itself tributary to our welfare, so that this too works together with the other events of their lives for the good of them that love Him, but when the proper time has come He rebukes the wind and the sea, and there is a great calm. The thunder-showers that burst upon us soon pass by, and the air is purer and the sunshine is brighter than before. The tempests that trouble the sea and toss the ship are but for a little while, and soon the waves are quieted and all is peace and joy. The afflictions that cast their shadow upon us are for a short time, and compared with the eternal weight of glory are light; soon they will pass by, and the soul will be at rest and experience joy and gladness in the favors of Providence. The storms of every sort are for a little while. At least they are temporal. If we must pass through daily suffering, the days of probation will not last for ever. If the Church must be afflicted by evils within and persecutions from without, the gates of hell shall not prevail against her, and soon she shall be a glorious Church triumphant in heaven, where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest. Only a little while, and the severest afflictions shall have passed away; for the children of God they cannot abide for ever. The Lord has promised to make them work for good and to deliver from them. Thus saith the Lord: "Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him; I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him."

Ps. 91, 14–16. Even though it seem long before the calamity be overpast, it cannot endure beyond this vale of tears. "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." In the worst case, earth's stormy night will soon be over, and the bright day of eternity will dawn upon us, when there shall be no more night and no more weeping among the redeemed people who enter into the joys of their Lord.

Brethren, we have a merciful and mighty Savior who is ready to quiet all the tumults in our souls as well as all the storms that howl around us. That which causes unrest within us, above all else, is sin. There can be no calm in our breasts as long as that reigns there and the dreadful penalty denounced against it alarms us. Jesus is a present help in every trouble. Whatever sorrows may be yours, only come to Him, and He will give you relief. There is no storm in which His "Peace, be still" is not effective. But He came to save His people from their sins. That is His special office. And sin is our great trouble. O come to Him, therefore, with your sin, and all the unrest which it causes in your heart, and He will give you peace. There is no pacifier like Jesus. Only come to Him and trust in Him. Even your troubled thinking will be quieted when you rest your throbbing temples on His loving breast. He understands what is dark to us; He leads through gloom to glory; He will satisfy all the deep thinking as well as all the earnest yearning of your soul. Problems that you cannot solve are solved by His wisdom and power and love: all is well, though you do not understand it all. Come to Him and find forgiveness; come to Him and find rest for your souls. Amen.

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany.

MATT. 13, 24–30.

Another parable put He forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

Dear Brethren:

In our Creed we confess our faith in a holy Christian Church. From the earliest ages the disciples of Christ knew and confessed that there is a congregation of saints on earth. Those who believe in Jesus form a society, which is called the Church, and this society or church is holy. Therefore the apostles, writing to the brethren, address them as saints. Therefore it is written: "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." 1 Cor. 3, 17. Hence the apostle Paul writes: "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, long-suffering." Col. 3, 12. The design of God is that His children should be holy, and the work of the Holy Ghost is to make them holy in Christ Jesus the Lord. Hence it is said: "Ye are a

chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." 1 Pet. 1, 9. And yet we read statements in the Scriptures which would indicate that not all are saints who are found in the kingdom of God. And so it is. There is sin yet in the saints, and there are some among the saints who are not sanctified. Let us endeavor to understand this matter. Our text invites to it by speaking of

THE TARES AMONG THE WHEAT.

We shall inquire: 1. *What they are*, 2. *Where they are sown*, 3. *Who sows them, and* 4. *What is to be done with them.*

1. 'The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed into his field, but while men slept his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way." This our Lord explains in a subsequent part of the chapter. "The good seed are the children of the kingdom, but the tares are the children of the wicked one." The tares are accordingly not wicked doctrines, but wicked persons. They are those who believe not in the Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore remain in their sin.

Originally God had made man holy, as He designed that His creature should be. He pronounced the work of His hands very good. Into the field of the world He sowed wheat. But the enemy came, and marred what God had made. Accordingly even in Paradise tares grew, and they have been overrunning the field ever since the days of Adam. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Rom. 5, 12. The children of the wicked one have replenished the earth.

But our Lord has in mind the kingdom of God and the relation of wicked men to it. The wheat are the children of the kingdom. Manifestly the reference is to that kingdom of heaven which the Savior came to set up, and in which there is salvation through faith in His blood. Accordingly the tares are those who will not come unto Him that they may be saved, but remain under condemnation, notwithstanding the deliverance which has been wrought and which is freely offered. They are those who will not repent and believe, and who remain children of the wicked one, notwithstanding the proffered grace by which God desired to purify them and adopt them as His own children. That these unbelieving people are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity is implied in the fact that they are unbelievers, and therefore yet in their sins. But they are children of the wicked one, not because they are not yet perfectly holy, that is, not because they still have some sins, but because they do not believe and thus put on Christ with His perfect righteousness unto justification of life.

It might seem, at first glance, as if it could not make much difference whether we regard the tares to be the unbelievers or whether we regard them as including all sinners. But a more careful view will correct that impression. All men have sinned, and in that view all are tares. And even when the kingdom of God is established sin has not been entirely eradicated. It remains in the world still; nay, it remains still in the very people who constitute this kingdom of God. In that respect the wheat would itself be tares. But the believer, though he would deceive himself if he said that he had no sin, is a sinner pardoned, and is therefore a different person in the eye of God from an unbelieving person, who is a sinner unpardoned. To the one his sin is not imputed, and he is therefore before the bar of God as if he had no sin: there is no condemnation

to him, because he is in Christ Jesus. The other has no Savior's righteousness, on the ground of which he can be absolved and pronounced just, because by his unbelief he has rejected the Lord Jesus and the gracious offer of life in Him. The one by faith embraces Christ and is justified; the other by unbelief rejects Christ and is condemned. That makes a difference of infinite importance. And it makes a difference also in another respect. The believer hates sin and loves righteousness, and although he cannot say that he has no sin, he can say that the sin which he has is not in him by his consent or even sufferance, but is under his as well as under his Lord's condemnation, and is not permitted to raise its head and assert any rights, or to usurp dominion; the unbeliever is still under the slavery of sin, and obeys it in the lusts of his flesh and brings forth fruit unto death. Not the sinners justified, who love righteousness, though the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and who are children of God, but the sinners who believe not and therefore remain under condemnation, being children of the wicked one and doomed to eternal death, are the tares.

2. What the field is in which the tares are sown is also expressly said by our Lord in the explanation of the parable. "The field is the world," He tells us. This is not precisely what we would expect. From the statement that the kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man that sowed good seed in his field we would rather conclude that the field is the church. Nor would we go astray if, in one aspect, we adopted this conclusion. Certainly there would be no illustration in the parable of matters in the kingdom of God if there were no reference in it to the church. How, without such reference, could it be said that the kingdom of God is at all like a man that sowed such seed? The Lord illustrates a phase of the kingdom of heaven in the parable. That is expressly declared.

But it is just as plainly asserted that the field is the world, and we could not understand the lesson if this were overlooked or not properly emphasized. Let us endeavor to understand it.

The field in which the sower, who is the Son of man, soweth the good seed, who are the children of the kingdom, is the world. He sets up His kingdom on earth. He does this by bringing the word of life to men and leading them to the great salvation which he has wrought out by His vicarious life and death. His kingdom comes when our Heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead a godly life. Those who by His grace believe are the children of the kingdom. These are the wheat. As the wheat is sown in the field, so the believers are set in the world. But these believers are the church, which is the congregation of saints, or believers. As it is, now, when wheat is sown and an enemy comes and sows tares, so it is when the church is planted in the world, or when believers are created by the power of God through the Gospel, and the devil comes and puts unbelievers among them. The children of the wicked one and the children of the kingdom are side by side on the same territory. They are mixed up with each other. The tares and the wheat grow together. Thus the field that our Lord had occupied by the children of the kingdom is occupied also by the enemy with the children of the wicked one. The kingdom of God makes its appearance in the world and works out its destiny amid the sin and commotion that is in the world. But just where the kingdom of God is set does Satan put forth all his energies to lay waste and to destroy. He sows tares just where the Lord sows wheat. Where the Savior by His grace has led some to faith and salvation and has thus set up His kingdom, Satan seeks to undermine the faith and bring death and desolation. Where Christ puts believers

and children of the kingdom, the devil puts unbelievers and children of the wicked one. The territory is occupied by them jointly. And thus it comes to pass that the field, which is the world, becomes in this respect an emblem of the church, where the children of the kingdom and the children of the wicked one are found together. As the good seed and the tares, sown by different persons with different purposes, are together on the field, so the children of the kingdom and the children of the wicked one, put there by different persons for different purposes, are together in the world; and as the wheat and the tares are mixed up in the field, so the believers and unbelievers are mixed up in the world. And this applies also to the church in the world. The children of the wicked one are mixed up there also with the children of the kingdom, notwithstanding that here only good seed was sown, that is, only believers were planted.

The truth is thus set forth for our learning and warning and comfort that the church, as it appears on earth, is never pure and perfect, but that as it has sins still remaining in the individual members, so it has persons still remaining among the members who are not sanctified and saved. There will always, in spite of all divine grace and human labor, be tares among the wheat, because the malice of the enemy cannot be overcome. In this same chapter our Lord illustrates the subject by another parable. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea and gathered of every kind; which, when it was full, they drew to the shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away." Those who are brought into the visible church will not all be sincere believers. Some will come with other motives than those of being saved; and thus it will come to pass that whenever or wherever a church is gathered by the grace of

God, the devil will also put his children there to annoy and to destroy.

No one should think that this makes the church essentially a mixed mass of believers and unbelievers. As it appears to us it is such. The good and the bad are together. But the bad do not form the church. They are tares. And the unbelievers are only unbelievers, though they do mingle with the believers in the visible church, and the wrath of God abides on them, though they are outwardly among the believers, because they reject Christ and are thus children of the wicked one. The tares are among the wheat, but they do not become wheat on that account. The church is still the congregation of believers, and has all the rights and powers of believers, notwithstanding the unbelievers that are outwardly mixed in it, just as the wheat remains wheat, though there are some tares among it.

3. The enemy that sowed them is the devil. In the world the tares might be supposed to spring up without being sown. The ground is full of the seed, and it requires no effort to grow them as it does to grow wheat. Just as weeds will spring up wherever the ground is cultivated, without being desired, nay in spite of all efforts to destroy them, so the wicked will everywhere appear without man's labor to produce them. The world lieth in wickedness, and since sin has entered into the world sinful beings come as naturally as thorns and briars. All men are born sinners. The devil has therefore by bringing about the fall of man secured the continual propagation of sinners, and thus the perpetual sowing of tares in the world, where Christ draws men unto Himself and thus sows His wheat.

But it is not the introduction of evil into the world and the continued supply of wicked men by natural generation that is intended to be illustrated. Let us keep in

mind that our Lord is speaking of the kingdom of heaven. This is like a man that sowed good seed, but his enemy sowed tares. How it comes that when our Lord establishes His Church as a communion of saints, sanctifying it with the washing of water by the word, there should be unholy persons in it—how it comes that when He sows good seed there should spring forth tares,—that is what is explained. It comes not from a design of the sower or from a fault in the seed. The Lord does not want His people to be unbelieving and ungodly men. That is not what His grace produces by the employment of His appointed means. They are designed to sanctify and save, and they accomplish that whereunto they are sent. Nor is the seed which He sows faulty. It is not as though He were Himself disappointed in His work, supposing that He sowed good seed, but finding that it was tares. What He sowed actually was wheat. That tares appeared in the field notwithstanding was owing to something else than His wish or His work. An enemy did the mischief; the devil sowed the tares.

Parables and comparisons never illustrate their subject in every particular. Because the two things, that which is illustrated and that which illustrates it, are not precisely alike, there will be differences in some respects. The sowing of the tares by an enemy explains how the tares got among the wheat. That illustrates how the devil gets wicked men into the church. But it is God that makes men, and the devil can only mar them. The enemy has made provision for replenishing the world with tares; and when Christ by His Word makes Christians and sets these in the world for a light and a blessing, the devil instigates bad men to go among them and endeavor to put out the light and prevent the blessing. He not only sows tares among the wheat, but he seeks to destroy the wheat

and convert it into tares. In that respect the figure does not seem appropriate, but the truth is sufficiently apparent, even where the parable does not present a point of resemblance. The children of the kingdom may become children of the wicked one, and the enemy seeks to get his tares among the wheat, whether by introducing ungodly men among the believers through hypocritical pretenses, or by inducing such as had been led to faith to abandon their Savior and fall away. The fact that a person is among the believers does not secure his salvation without being actually a believer himself. The devil sows tares among the wheat.

4. The servants felt that this is not as it should be, and inquired whether they should not go out and gather up the tares. It seems proper that as they do not belong where the devil placed them, they should be eradicated and destroyed. "But He said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest; and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn." The harvest time is said to be the end of the world, and the Lord therefore teaches that tares and wheat should continue together until the judgment day.

There are two points here which require special notice, that we may not misunderstand the lesson of our parable. In the first place, we must be careful not to regard it as a prohibition of church discipline, which is elsewhere expressly commanded; and in the second place we must be just as careful to lay to heart the earnest warning against persecution which it contains.

First, then, the parable is not designed to forbid or in any way to discourage church discipline. It could not do

this without coming into conflict with explicit divine requirements in this regard. Our Lord commands: "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." Matt. 18, 15–17. Those who will not put away their sin must be put away from the congregation. Sinners there will always be in it, but we must not have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; and if any one insists on having such fellowship, we must disfellowship him and clear ourselves of all responsibility in the matter. Hence the apostle writes to the Corinthians in regard to a member who was guilty of an offense: "Ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from you," and exhorts them, "Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person." 1 Cor. 6, 2. 13. The Lord thus commands that when a sin is known, it must be rebuked, and when a person becomes known as impenitent and ungodly, he must be put out of the congregation. What is thus clearly commanded cannot be forbidden by the same Lord. Nor does our text say anything different from what is elsewhere taught. It does not say that false doctrine and ungodly living shall be tolerated in the church. What it does say is that the children of the kingdom and the children of the wicked one shall be permitted to live together in the world, not that the church shall be indifferent, and let the wickedness have undisturbed sway in the church and eat around it as doth a canker.

But, secondly, while we must not permit false doctrine

or unholy living to have a place in the church, we must not, on the other hand, forbid the unbeliever and ungodly man a place in the world. That is an entirely different matter. The Lord thus manifests His mercy in letting the sinner live. It is sinful to hang or burn men because they do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and will not come to Him that they may be saved. They certainly ought to believe; certainly it would be for their own everlasting good if they did believe; it is sad, it is dreadful that they persist in a course that ends in perdition: but we must not on that account deny their right to live in the world and proceed to put them to death. That might consign some to eternal damnation who would repent, if they were permitted longer to live and enjoy the opportunity of hearing the Word of God. It might by mistake lead to the capital punishment of some who are really children of the kingdom, though purblind men regarded them children of the wicked one. Let both grow together until the harvest, "lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them." The history of religious persecutions has shown how often good men were murdered because they were supposed to be children of the wicked one, and no man can know how many of those who now are unbelievers may yet become believers. Let both grow together: the world is large enough for both, and justice will not on that account be overthrown and trodden under foot. The Lord Himself will in due time effect the separation and deal out judgment. The tares will be bound into bundles for burning; the wheat will be gathered into our heavenly Father's barn.

Brethren, it always has been the case that designing men and hypocrites found places in the holy Christian Church, and it always will be so. Be not offended on that account: do not prize the communion of saints less on

that account. It is the Church of Christ, with great powers and glorious privileges for all that. The Lord is in His holy temple still; the Lord still owns it and blesses it. The wicked men that are in it cannot vitiate the divine gifts or nullify the divine promises. There are tares among the wheat, but that does not make the wheat worthless. Blessed are the children of the kingdom, for they shall enter into the eternal joy of their Lord. Amen.

Sixth Sunday after Epiphany.

MATT. 17, 1–9.

And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John, his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with Him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only. And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.

Beloved Brethren in Christ:

The Gospel for this day describes the grandest of our Lord's epiphanies. If in the other Epiphany Gospels He is set before us in the glory of His power and His mercy, He is here presented in the glory of His person and the majesty of His divine authority. This manifestation took place upon a mountain. It is not the only case in which God chose high places for high transactions. The law was given upon a mount; the Gospel was sealed upon a mount. And fittingly may be mentioned, side by side with Sinai, where the law was given by Moses, and Calvary, where the blessed Savior died, the mountain, probably Tabor, where the Lord was transfigured. It was a wonderful event, and it sheds light upon several subjects of

profound interest to the followers of Jesus. Let us humbly inquire

WHAT THE TRANSFIGURATION OF JESUS TEACHES,

1. *Concerning Christ Himself*, 2. *Concerning man.* May the Lord be with us, according to His promise, and bless our speaking and hearing.

I. The account of our Lord's transfiguration *teaches us important lessons respecting His glory and His authority.* That glory was shown in the wonderful event described, and that authority was declared by the voice speaking out of the cloud that formed part of the marvelous scene.

1. "After six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them; and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light." That was a manifestation of His glory. There was no change in the person as to His essence, but there was a change in His appearance. It was a transfiguration, not a transubstantiation. The form, not the substance was changed. The Lord who walked in lowly wise with humble men and who was daily seen in His humiliation, was now beheld in His glory—the glory which He always had, but which did not always appear to the eyes of men.

St. John writes of the Eternal Son of God, whom he calls the Word, that He "was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." John 1, 14. The apostles and others beheld His glory in the blessed doctrine which He proclaimed and in the wonderful works which He performed; but no doubt the beloved

disciple has in mind also the extraordinary manifestation described in our text. That it made a deep and lasting impression on the minds of those who were favored with the privilege of witnessing it we see from a reference made to it by one of the other witnesses. St. Peter writes: "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard when we were with Him in the holy mount." 2 Pet. 1, 15–18. There was a display of the Lord's majesty which could not be forgotten by those who were favored with the marvelous vision.

No new power was bestowed by the Father upon His beloved Son on the mount of transfiguration. What was manifested now was His from the time of the incarnation. For it was the Word, the Eternal Son of God, who was God of God and Light of Light, that had been made flesh. God did not lose His Godhead and did not become less than God, when He was born of a woman. He still reigned supreme in the universe. Even when He hung upon the cross He was Lord of all, and had all power in heaven and upon earth. That simply shone forth now which was in Him always. The glory of Divinity was His from eternity. And it was not lost when He assumed humanity into the unity of His person. On the contrary, the human nature thus united became partaker of the glory. The man Christ Jesus was Himself the Almighty and Omnipresent Lord, in whose name every knee should bow in heaven and upon earth. "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Col. 2, 9. The Divinity pervaded the humanity and shone forth through

it, as the fire pervades the glowing iron and shines through it. Our Lord was God over all, blessed for ever, and His human nature, which was assumed and became part of His person, shared His glory. That glory beamed forth in the transfiguration. Generally it was restrained in the days of our Lord's humiliation. "Being in the form of God, He thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Phil. 2, 6–8. While our blessed Savior, even as regards His human nature, which was assumed by the divine nature of the only begotten Son of God, was possessed of all divine attributes and was thus in the form of God, He did not wish to use this power and glory and thus claim the honor of equality with God, but chose rather, in order that He might suffer and die for human sin and thus redeem the human race, to walk in lowliness and forego divine honors. He humbled Himself even to the ignominious death of the cross. And yet He who was crucified was none the less the Prince of glory. And now, though it was only by way of exception, that glory burst forth, and our Lord appeared in His essential brightness.

The effect of this transfiguration was manifest in His face and in His raiment. Language fails adequately to set forth the splendor. The evangelists seem to labor in their endeavors to express it. "His face did shine as the sun." That is the height of dazzling brilliancy as man conceives it. Nothing brighter than that is within imagination's reach. And the glory which shone forth in His face penetrated even His clothing. This too became glorious. "His raiment was white as the light." It became shining, St. Mark says, "exceeding white, so as no

fuller on earth can white them." "His raiment was white and glistening," says St. Luke. All the expressions show the exceeding brightness of the clothing, through which the glory of His humanity shone. The Lord appeared in the majesty and the splendor which belonged to Him, not only in His divinity, but also in His humanity, as this was taken up into the unity of the Son of God, and was not a different person, but one and the same person with it. The transfiguration declared the Lord Jesus to be the Son of God, "the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person." But it showed also that the humanity shared that glory, in that His face shone like the sun, and even His raiment was white as the light. The Savior is declared to be the Lord of glory in His entire person. God and man is united, and the undivided person, in His divinity and His humanity, is Lord of all, our Savior and our King.

2. While Peter yet spake, a bright cloud overshadowed the three disciples, "and behold a voice out of the cloud which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye Him." Christ is declared to be the Eternal Son of God, and thus clothed with divine authority, to which all men are to bow in reverence.

The glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, shines forth in His face and through His raiment. But it was not always to be seen as it was seen now in the wonderful transfiguration. During His sojourn on earth He ordinarily presented no winning appearance to the eyes of men. "He hath no form or comeliness," says the prophet; "and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him." Isa. 53, 2. He not only appeared as a mere man among men, but even as a man He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. It never lay in the design of God to bring conviction regarding spiritual

things to the minds of men by the evidence of sense. Our Lord could not have suffered and died for the sins of the world, if the divine glory which He possessed had been constantly displayed. The suffering and the death itself are not glorious in their appearance. They are signs rather of weakness and of vanquishment. Sufferings are clouds which veil the sun; death is the sinking of the sun below the horizon. They tell of mighty powers at work and seemingly victorious in our Lord's passion. It only seemed so; for while He really suffered shame and death as the penalty for our sin, and thus seemed to succumb to their hostile power, He just as really thus overcame every foe, and in dying swallowed up death in victory. The work of salvation could be accomplished only through our Lord's humiliation. Therefore His glory could not be essentially a matter of sense. It is testified to men, and that testimony must be received by faith. That Christ was the Son of God, true God and true man in one undivided person, and that He suffered upon the cross the penalty of human sin and accomplished an eternal redemption for us,—this could no more be seen by the people who lived when Jesus was suffering on earth and who saw Him in His labor of love and in His agony of pain, than it can be by us who know these things by the testimony of the Holy Spirit. Even those who beheld the transfiguration could not by that have the full assurance of faith that this Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior of the world. It was needful for them and needful for us that the voice from the cloud should tell us and make us sure that this is God's beloved Son. Only faith can have assurance of supernatural things. "We walk by faith, not by sight." 2 Cor. 5, 7.

Because the divine testimony is given that Jesus is the Eternal Son of God, His authority must be recognized by all. "He received from God the Father honor and

glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." 2 Pet. 1, 17. That is good ground why we should own Him as our Lord and Guide. Therefore the words were added, "Hear ye Him." He is the true prophet who is to teach us the things which belong to our peace. Those who will not hear Him have not the wisdom of God and the power of God to direct them and to bless them. They have not the life which He alone gives, as they have not the truth which He came to bring. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Heb. 1, 1–3. He is the only begotten of the Father, who came to offer Himself as a sacrifice for human sin, and who after the humiliation was, as to the human nature which He assumed, exalted to the right hand of God, where, as to His divine nature, He was from eternity enthroned in everlasting Majesty. Him it is right, Him it is needful to hear. Hence He says: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8, 31. 32. The reason of this He expresses when He says in another place: "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." John 6, 63. They have quickening power, bringing the light of truth to the understanding and delivering the heart from its bondage to sin. Hence when our Lord asked the twelve whether they would also leave Him, as many of His disciples had done, "Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou

hast the words of eternal life." John 6, 68. He is not only clothed with authority to be the teacher of men, but He has the truth unto salvation to teach, which alone can give us light and life, and the rejection or even neglect of which is everlasting death. Hear ye Him! For thus the voice from heaven commands.

This great Teacher speaks to us through the Word of faith which we preach. He speaks to you, dear hearers, now, as He has spoken to you so often. He has besought you to come to Him that ye might have life, to follow Him that ye might glorify His name and do His will on earth. Has He received a reverential hearing? Have you not often declined, for reasons that do not seem respectable even to the natural mind, to come to the house of God where He speaks to you, and to read the blessed Book through which He would teach you the words of eternal life? Has He not—He who loved you unto death and stretches out His hands now to save you—therefore remained a stranger to you?

> "Behold, a Stranger at the door!
> He gently knocks, has knocked before—
> Has waited long, is waiting still:
> You treat no other friend so ill."

And have you not often, even when you did go to church and read your Bible, refused to let His Word dwell in you richly in all wisdom and suffered Satan to take it away from you again? O brethren, hear your gracious Lord, who comes with salvation. "Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it."

II. While the principal lesson which the transfiguration teaches pertains to the person and authority of our Lord, it teaches us also something concerning man which we should be willing to learn. It teaches us something concerning man in the present world, and something con-

cerning him in the world beyond the grave. Let us hear the instruction which it gives.

1. Concerning man in the present life it tells us of his fear whenever the supernatural is mentioned, and of the disposition to enjoy the present, without regard to the changes that may come or must come, and for which wisdom would suggest the preparation now, instead of indulging in present pleasures.

When the voice came from the bright cloud and the disciples heard it, "they fell on their face and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them and said, Arise, and be not afraid." It is by no means the only case in which the Scriptures report of a fear that fell on the people when things pertaining to the world beyond these clods and this heart-beat are the subject treated. On the contrary, it is mentioned with such frequency as to constitute the rule, that in the presence of the supernatural the soul of man trembles. Thus it is related that at the birth of our Savior the shepherds were filled with fear when the heavenly visitant appeared to their astonished sight. "Lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid." Luke 2, 9. At the resurrection, "Behold, there was a great earthquake; for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and His raiment white as snow; and for fear of him the keepers did shake and became as dead men." Matt. 28, 2–4. And not only at the apparition of beings that are not of earth, but also at the manifestation of powers that are not in nature, do we find fear aroused. For instance, when the Lord commanded the tumultuous waves of the sea to be quiet and they obeyed Him, the disciples "feared exceedingly." Mark 4, 41. It is so still. There is many a braggart, even in these days of

boasted superior enlightenment, who defies God and the devil as long as the sun shines and the company remains, but who trembles at the noise of a mouse when the darkness and the solitude has come. He is not afraid of the tiny power which a mouse may possess; but he trembles because that suggests the possibility that something more than such a little nibbler is stirring and may confront him with supernatural power. In short, man is conscious of sin and of deserving damnation, and he knows not at what moment or in what way the doom which he feels to be his due may fall upon him. Whence it is to come is not clear to nature, and hence every suggestion of supernatural beings or supernatural forces strikes terror to the soul. The imagination thus often produces a scare when no danger is near, and the rustling of the leaves becomes a source of terror. "The wicked flee when no man pursueth," Prov. 28, 1. Conscience makes cowards. The fear is the testimony from the hidden depths of our nature that disorder has come and dissolution must follow. Hence the dread of all that is inexplicable, as though it must prove the executioner to the soul which feels itself worthy of death.

When our Lord was transfigured before Peter, James and John, and there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with Him, "then answered Peter and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for Thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias." Peter was the readiest and most impulsive of the apostles, and generally served as spokesman. He beheld now the glory of his Lord; he felt now the comfort of being separated from the world and being present with the Savior; he thought now that it would be a blessed thing if it could be always thus. And that was the import of his petition. He had laid aside something of his former rashness and officiousness, and now submitted the matter to the Lord. "If Thou wilt, let us make here three taber-

nacles;" and the reason for his request was that "it is good to be here." He desired the present pleasure of companionship with the Lord, and that not in His lowliness and suffering, but in His glory; and in such desire, which was surely not quite devoid of selfishness, he was forgetful of the cross that must be borne before the crown can be worn, and of the tribulation through which it is necessary to pass before the kingdom of glory and bliss is reached. And this too opens a view of man's nature and shows us his present constitution and disposition. Man wants the happiness of Christ's presence, the enjoyment of His splendor, and but too often thinks no further than of such pleasure. The blessedness of seeing the Lord, the rapture of assurance that our sin is forgiven, and that we are accepted as children and heirs of heaven, that is the desire of our heart, and when that is attained we are ready to exclaim, "It is good to be here; here let us build tabernacles and stay." That there are foes for us to face; that we must fight the good fight of faith; that we must behold our Savior in His suffering and be persecuted as His followers; that we must take up the cross and endure hardness and affliction,—this is so apt to be overlooked; and, alas! so often when it comes we are not ready for it and are so prone to say, It is *not* good to be here. O brethren, see that ye abide with Jesus, even when, by reason of the cross, it does not to the flesh seem good to be there. It is good to be with Jesus, even though He lead through fierce conflicts and fiery trials. It is not good to build tabernacles here, although the spot is sunny and the air is balmy, instead of doing our work and continuing our journey. When the evening comes we shall rest; when the pilgrimage is ended we shall be forever with the Lord in His glory: not now yet; after a little while.

2. Concerning the state of man beyond this present

life our Gospel also gives us some instruction. It shows us that those who have departed are still alive and that the bodies of the dead shall rise again.

"There appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with Him." These men, prominent in the history of God's people, had long since passed from the scenes of earth in which they had taken so active a part. Fifteen hundred years before this transfiguration Moses, the great leader and lawgiver of Israel, had died in the land of Moab and was buried there. Six hundred years later, but still some nine centuries before the glorious scene here described, Elijah the Tishbite, one of the mightiest of the prophets of God, proclaimed with bold fidelity the will of the Lord, and when his work was done "went up by a whirlwind into heaven." They had fulfilled their mission on earth and disappeared from the varied scenes of the present life. But our text shows us that they were still living, notwithstanding their departure from this world. They appeared to the witnesses of the transfiguration—they themselves, not some shade or vision only, were there with Jesus. "Behold, there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias, who appeared in glory, and spake of His decease which He should accomplish in Jerusalem." Luke 9, 30. 31. They belonged to the old dispensation, but they were with Christ, of whom all the prophets bare witness, and the redemption which should be effected by His death was their glorious theme. Those who die in faith are still alive and ever happy. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord."

Although there is no direct testimony contained in our narrative concerning the resurrection of the body, we still gather from it confirmation of the fact which is elsewhere stated. "As touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God,

saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." Matt. 22, 31. 32. The argument is that if the patriarchs are alive, as they must be in accordance with the promise that the Lord would be their God, there must be a resurrection of the dead also, as the body too has share in the promise and must be raised to life. Here we have Elias bodily in the Lord's presence and sharing His glory in the transfiguration; for Elijah had been taken to heaven without seeing death, and was therefore bodily in heaven as he was bodily present in this scene of glory. How it was with Moses, who had died and whose body was buried, we do not know; but we do know that two men, which were Moses and Elias, appeared in glory, and that this gives assurance of the glorification of the human body as well as of its participation in the blessedness which is promised to the saints of God. These bodies shall rise again, and in our flesh shall we see God.

He who was transfigured before the disciples is our Lord and our God. We have known and believed that He is God's beloved Son. The decease of which the men spake in the transfiguration has been accomplished. It is finished. The Eternal Son, incarnate for us, has purchased and delivered us, and these things have been testified in due time. By the grace of God we have heard the Savior. The truth has been made known to us. There is salvation in Him, there is salvation in no other. Will you not come to Him that you may have life? Come, and in the things pertaining to our salvation see no man, save Jesus only. Amen.

Septuagesima.

MATT. 20, 1–16.

For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the market-place, and said unto them: Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive. So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the laborers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the good man of the house, saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong; didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

Dear Brethren:

In the chapter preceding this from which our text is taken our Lord instructed a rich man, who had inquired what he must do to inherit eternal life, to go and sell what he had and give to the poor. That was a hard saying, and the man "went away sorrowful, for he had great pos-

sessions." The object in asking this of him was not to teach that such a work of self-denial would entitle him to eternal life, but to show him that he lacked the righteousness which the law requires and the penitence which precedes the acceptance by faith of the righteousness which the gospel offers. The law was preached that it might be a schoolmaster to lead the rich man to the Savior. But the thought which actuated him and led him to imagine that nothing was lacking to him, is one that is common among men. Even Peter is not yet wholly free from its influence when he says, "Behold, we have forsaken all and followed Thee: what shall we have therefore?" There was in the question something of that dream of merit which is so natural to humanity. But that must be banished from our hearts as inconsistent with the whole plan of salvation by grace through the merits of Christ apprehended by faith. Therefore our Lord connects with these questions the warning, that when we think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, which is always the case when we imagine ourselves entitled to rewards at the hands of God, we are in danger of being last, because we put ourselves first, and illustrates this by the parable of our text concerning

THE LABORERS IN THE LORD'S VINEYARD.

Let us for our instruction and admonition consider this under the following heads: 1. *The Call extended;* 2. *The Reward promised;* and 3. *The Warning given.* May the Holy Spirit enlighten us and lead us to seek salvation by grace alone.

I. The laborers are employed by the Lord of the vineyard; they do not hire themselves. The Lord of the vineyard calls all men to labor; He does not except or excuse any. The Lord assigns the labor; the laborers do

not choose for themselves where they shall work or what they shall do.

1. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard." As it is in the ordinary business of this world, so is it also in the church: the proprietor appoints his workmen. God calls men as laborers into His vineyard, and they can work there only when He employs them. First He must bring us into His kingdom of grace, then we are to do the work assigned us.

By nature we are not in the Lord's vineyard, and are not qualified for the work to be done in it. Of those whom the Lord has appointed as His laborers it is written: "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God; which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." 1 Pet. 2, 9. 10. Only by the grace of our Lord are we chosen to glorify Him as workers together with Him. Without Him we can do nothing. "You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ: by grace ye are saved." Eph. 2, 1–5. By nature we are all the servants of sin, and the wages of sin is death. What our Lord said of the unbelieving Jews is true of all men as long as

they are without faith in Jesus: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." John 8, 44. God calls us out of the bondage of sin and servitude of Satan to live under Christ in His kingdom and serve Him in the liberty of God's children. "The truth shall make you free," that in the power of Jesus' name you may do earnest work in His vineyard, and receive the reward which your Lord has merited for you and which His grace bestows. He "gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Tit. 2, 14.

It is by the infinite love of God that a Savior was given us to redeem us from the bondage of sin, and it is by His infinite grace that we are called to share the blessing of His redeemed and purified people. Therefore it is a singular mark of human perverseness when people talk as though it were a great condescension for those who have won titles and honors on earth to embrace Christianity. The greatest honor that can be conferred on a human being is to be called into the kingdom of God and be made an heir of heaven. "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you," saith the Lord, "and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit." John 15, 16. God confers the richest of blessings upon us when He makes us laborers in His vineyard, and faithful laborers appreciate the blessedness of their calling.

God calls us by the Gospel. That is His Word and voice. And we are sure that the great privilege of God's people is ours only when we hear the voice of the Lord of the vineyard. "The promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Acts 2, 39. We cannot serve Him of whom we know nothing; it would be presumption, if we could, to enter His service without being called; and the service would in the best case

be a mere pretense, as we would not have the strength needed to do His work. For He who calls us quickens us also, and endows us with power from on high. The Gospel gives us light and life when it gives us the call to serve the Lord. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Rom. 10, 17. When that is heard, the voice of the Lord calling us to His kingdom and glory resounds in our ears, and we are sure that He would have us come and do His work on earth and receive His gracious gifts unto eternal life in heaven. Without the Word of God, as that is written in Holy Scripture for our learning, we can have no such assurance. Therefore we must lend no ear to the seducing spirits that spread their delusions on the pretense that these have been revealed to them in dreams and ecstasies and special inspirations: "to the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Isai. 8, 20. Neither would it be necessary to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, if the call and gift came to men and brought them into the Lord's vineyard without the revelation recorded in the Scriptures. Beware of the enthusiasts who would lead you away from the Bible, and thus prepare the way for human error, that gives no life and no strength and brings no grace and no blessing. If men are not called by the Gospel they are not called at all, and that Gospel is written in the blessed volume of the Holy Scriptures. These testify of Jesus, and they alone show us the will and way of the Lord. He employs the laborers in His vineyard, but He calls them through the Word of the Gospel as that Word is given us in the Bible.

2. Whom does He call? Our text tells us that the householder, to whom the kingdom of heaven is like, went out to hire laborers into his vineyard early in the morning, and again at the third, sixth, ninth, and eleventh hours, at

all these times finding men who still stood idle in the market place. The Lord does not tell us whether any reference is had in these different hours to any special historical periods at which the gospel call was given, or, if such allusion was designed, what these periods were. It may be that the promulgation of the Gospel in Adam's time, and again in Noah's, and then in the time of our Lord's incarnation and labor on earth, was had in mind; for at these periods all the dwellers on the earth were made acquainted with the wonders of God's grace in Christ. More probably our Lord referred to the preaching first to the Jews, then to the Gentiles, extending the call still further among the tribes and nations until it reached the ends of the earth, some peoples being called earlier, some later in the day of the world's history. But that is not the important feature in this part of the parable, and therefore no further explanation is given. What is important for us and for all men is easily understood. It is that not all men are called at precisely the same time. Some nations must wait longer than others until the light penetrates their darkness; some individuals are earlier brought to a knowledge of the truth in Jesus than others. Why this is so we cannot tell in every case; probably we know it only in part in any case. The ways of God are wonderful, and it does not seem best in His sight to reveal all His counsels to us. But the fact we know, and that thus it is wise and good we know; that is enough. The employer does not need to tell his laborers everything, and only the presumptuous servant would ask why one is hired early and the other late. The Master understands His business and will do what is best; and He is gracious, and will tell us all that it is good for us to know. Only trust Him, and give due heed to what He tells you.

His desire is that all should come, and His plans are laid in accordance with this merciful purpose. Whatever

difference there may be in the hour of calling, He seeks the salvation of all by leading them into His vineyard. In His design He excludes none. For the Holy Spirit has expressly told us that "He will have all men to be saved, and to come to a knowledge of the truth." 1 Tim. 2, 4. He "is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 2 Pet. 3, 9. Therefore the command was given: "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature: he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Mark 16, 15. 16. Hence where the call is extended to us we can be sure that the Lord of the vineyard wants us among His laborers. And more than this: we can then be assured that the Lord's time has come, and we must not delay. Then the day of salvation has dawned for us, and putting off the one thing needful may prove fatal.

"Why stand ye here all the day idle?" No one can truly say, "No man hath hired us," when the Gospel has gone out into all lands; and least of all can you, to whom that Gospel has been preached to-day, and so often before, present such an excuse. The Lord our God calleth you, and He desires not to impose heavy burdens upon you, but to bless you above all that ye are able to ask or think. He calls you now: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And in this rest of your soul you will have a mind to work in the Lord's vineyard, and find that a delight. If you refuse to hear, what answer can you give on the judgment day to the question: Why did you stand all the day of your life on earth in the market place idle? Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right the Lord will give you, though you have spent in the service of sin days and years that ought to have been devoted to Him. There is no excuse for idling away the time and wasting the life, when the Lord has important work for you to do and earnestly

calls you to do it. Dear hearer, He calls you, and calls you now: will you heed the call? "To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Heb. 3, 15.

3. The laborers are hired to work. They are not to go into the vineyard for the purpose of seeking a life of ease and mere indulgence in the fruit of the vine. There is work to be done, and "woe unto them that are at ease in Zion." True, the blessings which the Lord of the vineyard bestows are to be highly prized and thankfully enjoyed; and the laborers are to be glad all their days that they have been delivered from the tyrant who had bound them and exacted hard labor, without other wages than the misery which his tyranny inflicts upon his slaves. They rejoice in the God of their salvation, who has brought them into pleasant places in Christ Jesus and cheers them with the hope of glory, though they have merited only death. But they are called to work, and thus serve the Lord, and serve Him not only in the worship of His house and in the extension of His kingdom, but also in supplying the wants of His brethren.

The Lord desires that His praise shall be made glorious, and that we shall worship Him in the beauty of holiness. In the congregation of saints the redeemed are to come together and make a joyful noise unto the God of their salvation. "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord." Ps. 122, 1. And this not only because the heart longs to join in the praises of God, who hath done great things for us, but also to tell of all His wondrous works, that others too may learn to know Him and unite in thanking Him for His goodness and praying for the continuance of His blessing. And this is the chief work that is to be done on earth. He has made us co-laborers with Himself in making known His salvation in all the world and calling people to come and share the unspeakable gift. We all have our work to do in our

earthly vocation, and this too is part of the service that we are to perform as followers of the Lord and laborers in His kingdom. Our temporal business must not be sundered from our spiritual service. We are to work in our shops and fields and storehouses and studies that we may carry out the will of the Lord and render service to our fellow men by the labor of our profession. He who pursues his calling merely for the purpose of making money, or even of securing a livelihood, as if this depended on his efforts and not on the blessing of the Master whom we serve, has not yet learned properly to estimate his high dignity and duty as a child of God and heir of heaven. "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him." Col. 3, 17. But the chief work, to which all the rest is subordinate, is the glorifying of God by making known among men the unsearchable riches of Christ in the salvation of sinners. Therefore the work of the Church is paramount. Serve the Lord by ministering to the spiritual wants of men, then serve the Lord by ministering to their bodily wants.

Brethren, ye are called to be laborers in the Lord's vineyard, not idlers in the market place, nor loiterers among the vines. Go to work earnestly. Do not stand around in other people's way and make ungracious remarks to discourage those who have a mind to work. There is much to be done before the night cometh, and each of you has his share to do in the accomplishment of the Master's gracious will. If our hearts were more grateful to God for the great mercies we enjoy, and realized more fully what wretchedness is theirs who do not yet share the blessings of the Gospel, we would not idle away so much time and waste so many gifts, by the right use of which so much could be done in the vineyard of the Lord. Least of all would we then talk of having done our share, and leaving

the field awhile to others who have in our estimation done shamefully little. It is true that many do but little, though they might do much; but it is true also that no man has done his share as long as he can do more. Not that the Master is so exacting, but that the heart that has learned to appreciate His love is not satisfied with less than the utmost possible. When you find appeals for more help in the great work of the Church becoming distasteful, and murmurings arising in your souls because you are expected to be always doing and always giving, enter into your closet and pray fervently for more grace and strength; for the devil is striving to draw you out of the vineyard of the Lord and cheat you of your reward, though he has nothing to offer you instead but abject slavery and everlasting death.

II. But that brings us to another point in our parable—the reward promised. "When even was come the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the laborers and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the good man of the house, saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day." The first thought that would occur in reading of the penny is that it represents the eternal life which is the gift of God to them that are faithful unto death. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life."

But there is a difficulty in this interpretation that needs explaining. In the first place, while it is certain from the Scriptures that those who are brought into the vineyard of our Lord and remain faithful laborers there until the evening receive the crown of glory, it is equally

certain that those who claim that crown as a merited reward for their work never get it. They lack the faith which trusts in the grace of God and the merits of Christ alone, and which is the only means on man's part of laying hold on eternal life. And, in the second place, when the heavenly crown is once obtained there can be no envious discontent with the gift bestowed. In heaven there is no murmuring and complaining. Whatever weaknesses may be compatible with the possession of the grace of God on earth, we are quite sure that when heaven is reached there will be no more sinning and sorrowing. But the penny was given as well to those who were dissatisfied with their wages as to those who were grateful for the Master's gracious gift. Manifestly some received the penny who never wore the crown of glory, but who, by their own conduct in reference to the penny offered, showed that they were not in a condition to receive the crown.

But still the penny represents the gracious gift that is offered to all the laborers alike. And certainly God promises every blessing to them that are His and so labor in His vineyard. "For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." Ps. 84, 11. But among those who are brought into His vineyard on earth there are always some who have not embraced the grace which is offered to all alike, and who imagine the vain thing that they merit more than their fellow laborers because they have labored longer. They have not apprehended the salvation at all that is offered in Christ without money and without price, as a free gift of God's grace, and remaining in the bondage of sin they are envious of those who receive the crown of life which is graciously offered to all, and are dissatisfied because they do not receive more than those whom they supposed to have mer-

ited less. To all alike the whole blessing of grace and salvation is offered—to these self-righteous murmurers as well as to the humble believers who think of no merit but that of their blessed Savior and seek nothing in all their labor but to glorify Him. The Master still offers the penny of His grace to them all, including the eternal glory which Christ has acquired for all. He makes no difference among men, desiring that all should be saved and enjoy the blessedness of the saints in heaven. The crown of glory is designed for all and offered to all as a free gift. That is what He has agreed to give all the laborers in His vineyard.

But there is a difference among men, though the Lord does not make it. The first called were not willing to receive the gracious gift. The words of the householder to the discontented laborer, "Take that is thine and go thy way," indicate that those first called cast the offered gift from them, and would not agree to the employer's terms, though the offer was precisely what had been promised in the beginning. The self-righteous reject the grace and have nothing, though the Lord offers them the same blessing that all His people enjoy. Their unbelief despises the gracious gift. Therefore the warning words which apply the lesson of the parable are added: "Many are called, but few chosen." Those who are unwilling to accept the salvation as a free gift through Christ are not among the elect, who are blessed "with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world." Thus the first called become the last in blessing, as was the case with the Jews who murmured because the Gentiles also, though called into the vineyard much later, were recipients of the grace of life in Jesus.

The scene of the whole transaction represented in the parable is this earth before the final reckoning takes place.

It is designed to teach us lessons respecting the kingdom of God as it appears in this world, that those who are murmuring now at God's gracious dealings may take warning. The evening, when the laborers were called and the hire was given, does not refer, except by implication, to the final judgment. Then there will be no opportunity for expressions of discontent on the part of those who are offered blessings, and no further grace will be offered to those who have died in their self-righteousness. Then there will be no expostulation with the dissatisfied, but an assignment to the doom which they have merited, as they refused all else while the time of grace lasted. The evening represents any time when the ways of God are reviewed and judgments are formed of His dealings. To-day some are thinking of God's promises of eternal life to all alike, and seeing others enjoy the same gift of grace and the same glorious hopes of heaven with themselves, are murmuring that the Scriptures offered no prospect that they shall obtain a more exalted heaven than the later converts, or their poor brethren who seem to them much less worthy of a crown of glory. They all have the penny promised and in prospect alike, and some, supposing the gift to be according to the merit acquired by labor, complain of the unfairness of our Lord because they get no more. And to-day the Lord says to such persons, "Friend, I do thee no wrong; didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way; I will give unto this last even as unto thee." The hire is the gracious gift of salvation through faith in Christ, without any merit or worthiness in us, and the Gospel is offering that to us to-day and every day Take it, and praise the Lord for His goodness, and labor in His vineyard in gratitude for the unspeakable gift. Then the jealousy and envy of others and the boast of yourselves will cease, and in the final reckoning you will not be among the called who are

not chosen. "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." Eph. 2, 8. 9.

III. Therefore let us take heed to the warning which our parable contains. This warning is fourfold.

1. Do not self-righteously claim a reward for the labors which you perform in the Lord's vineyard. It is a grace that you are permitted to labor for such a Master in such a cause. No one is worthy of the work and place, and it is only by the goodness of the Lord that we are enabled to do anything for His glory. Appreciate this, and labor in gratitude. Gracious rewards are promised those who live under Him in His kingdom, but it is all of grace, not of debt. Seeking it as due to us in virtue of any merit on our part is renouncing it as a gracious gift, and shows that we have never entered the vineyard as acceptable laborers and done our work in the Master's spirit and according to the Master's will. For claiming merit of our own by which we could earn a place in heaven is rejecting the merit of our Savior, through whom alone such a place can be attained. "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you would be justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." Gal. 5, 4. If we present claims according to the righteousness of the law, our claim will be allowed to the full extent of justice; but it will be an allowance full of woe, because we have merited only damnation, and can merit nothing else. We are saved by grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, by faith in His name. That is our only hope of salvation. "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt." Rom. 4, 4. But when the grace is rejected, salvation is rejected; "for by grace are ye saved, through faith." "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith

without the deeds of the law." Rom. 3, 27. 28. Beware then of the self-righteous trust in your labor, as if that merited the gift of God which is bestowed alone by grace. Such work-righteous conceit of self is the renunciation of all blessings because it is the rejection of all grace.

2. Beware lest your eye be evil because God is good. It seems strange that such a warning should be needful in the kingdom of Christ, where love is meant to reign. But there were some who murmured because God, who can do what He will with His own, is good to all and graciously offers His gifts of grace unto salvation to all alike. And there are such people in the visible church still. They imagine that they ought to have more than others, and because God looks only at the merit of His dear Son, and on the ground of that pours His gifts bountifully upon all, giving to each as much as he is capable of receiving, they murmur and complain as if an injustice had been done them that they fare no better than others, though all are offered eternal blessedness. "Is thine eye evil because I am good?" is the Lord's question to such unloving and unreasonable souls. Beware of that evil eye that looks with jealousy upon the grace bestowed upon others. Satan may mislead some of us, if we watch not and pray. The flesh is still in us, and pride and envy are easily aroused. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Call upon God, and He will protect you. Appreciate the salvation which God offers in His Gospel as a gift of pure grace, and rejoicing in the goodness of God to you, you will be able to rejoice also when others, though they may come late into the vineyard, have the same grace, and labor with you for the glory of Him who gave it.

3. Take heed lest deeming yourselves first, ye become last, and forfeit all blessings. The Jews were first called, but because they despised the grace of God and

went about to be justified by the law, they were rejected and the Gentiles received the promise. And still there are many who imagine that they have superior claims upon the goodness of God and His blessings. They put themselves first and they become last, because they think of their own merit and magnify that, and not of the grace of God by which alone they are blest and which is alone to be magnified. Those who take the chief place in their fond conceit of themselves will be required to take with shame the lower place for which they are fitted. Faith renders man humble, because it relies wholly upon grace and upon the merit of another, even of the Savior, to whom it gives all the glory. Hence, whenever proud thoughts enter the soul, as if we had merited aught or were not receiving our due, we may be sure that Satan is at work and seeks our destruction. Be thankful for the gracious gifts that God bestows and walk humbly before your God, who blesses you, not because you have merited His blessing, but because He is good.

4. Finally, there is a solemn warning in the words, "Many be called, but few chosen." It is indeed the practical lesson illustrated by the whole narrative. Comparatively few enter the strait gate and walk upon the narrow path that leads to eternal life. Even of those who are called into the vineyard and are accounted as laborers, many fail to obtain the crown of glory, though it is offered them. They are called, indeed, but not chosen. This is not because the good Lord of the vineyard has so desired it and so ordained it, that only a few shall have the eternal blessing. It is one of the most dreadful of errors preached among men, that God from eternity decreed that only a few of the lost shall be saved, and that He formed His plan of salvation in accordance with that decree. He desired all to be saved; He sent His Son as a ransom for all; He commanded that the Gospel should be preached

to all nations. On His part everything was done and is done to secure the salvation of all. Therefore the words of our text, "Many be called, but few chosen," are given, not as a discouraging announcement of an absolute divine decree, but as a warning, that we may make our calling and election sure by trusting in the grace of God and relying upon the merits of our Savior. If we refuse, when the Lord calls us, to enter His vineyard, or outwardly enter it while our hearts are not loyal to the Master, or proudly think of our own merit and a crown to be worn by our work and worthiness, instead of accepting the crown which our Savior purchased for us and which is offered as a gift of grace, we may be called indeed, but we are not chosen—not chosen because we have rejected Him in whom alone there is an election unto eternal life. Heed the warning, and cling to Him by faith, without any thought of merit or work to secure what He bestows as a free gift of grace.

In this spirit, dear brethren, enter into the vineyard of your Lord, and work with your might while it is day. Work that His good will, which is that man may be blessed on earth, and for ever blessed in heaven, may be done. And when your labor is done there remaineth a rest for you in the mansions above, where you shall for ever praise the grace that saved you. Amen.

Sexagesima.

LUKE 8, 4–15.

And when much people were gathered together, and were come to Him of every city, He spake by a parable: A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the wayside: and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit a hundredfold. And when he had said these things, He cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. And His disciples asked Him, saying, What might this parable be? And He said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among the thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. But that on the good ground are they, which, in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.

Beloved in the Lord:

Many are called, but few are chosen. This was one of the warnings given us in last Sunday's Gospel. To some men this sounds discouraging. Unaccustomed to draw their cheer exclusively from the Word of God, they are saddened by the thought that a man may be called without being chosen. But whatever effect it may have on our minds, such is the truth. Many of those who join with us in hearing the Lord's Word, and singing the Lord's

praises, are not among the saved. The Church is essentially invisible. We know not who among the assembled worshipers are sincere believers. We can know only the profession, not its sincerity or insincerity. But God knoweth them that are His; He knows who believes and who only pretends to believe. Many are called, and we can recognize them as such by their confession; but not all of these are owned of God as His dear children. Some are hypocrites, and are not chosen; some begin well, but do not remain steadfast, and are not chosen. Our to-day's Gospel shows us how it is. The fault is not in God, as if He had not the same mercy for all and did not offer the same grace to all, but it is in the hearers. Whilst God's grace is the same and His Word is the same, the hearers are not the same. Let us give ear to our Lord's instruction concerning

THE DIFFERENT HEARERS OF GOD'S WORD.

These hearers are of four kinds: 1. *The hardened;* 2. *The superficial;* 3. *The worldly-minded;* and 4. *The good.* May the Holy Spirit prepare the ground of our hearts to receive the good seed of the Word unto our own salvation and to the welfare of our fellow men.

I. The first class of hearers described in our text is the hardened, whose hearts are like the trodden path. "A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it." "Now the parable is this: The seed is the Word of God. Those by the wayside are they that hear; then cometh the devil and taketh away the Word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved."

1. The character of these wayside hearers is sufficiently indicated in the parable. As the seed that falls on the hard-trodden road can take no root and bear no fruit,

but is rather exposed to the birds and devoured, so the Word that falls upon the hardened heart does not penetrate it, and the devil carries it away, lest it should subsequently sink in and strike root. The sower and the seed are all right, but the soil is such as to promise no fruit, because the seed can get no hold.

These impervious hearers are not all of the same species. Some obstinately resist the Word and actively oppose it. They are not content with rejecting its offers of grace and closing their hearts to every ray of light, but they denounce the Gospel as an imposture and rail against the Church as an institution of priestcraft. They are the confirmed infidels and scoffers, whose conscience is seared as with a hot iron, and who walk in the vanity of their mind, "having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." Eph. 5, 18. Some of these are pitiful persons who are blindly led by unprincipled men that delight in waging war against Christ and the Church, but they are hardened in sin and as stubborn as their blind guides, so that the Word has no effect upon them.

But there are some of these wayside hearers who do not externally oppose the Word, agreed as they are with the scoffers and persecutors in their inward hostility to the truth in Jesus. They do not wage open war against Christianity and against the Church, but neither will they give earnest attention to the Word preached and will not heed it as the message of God. They may go to the Lord's house, and may feel some interest in the music, or in the faces, or in the dresses, or even in the sermon as a literary production, but the voice of the Lord calling them is not heard or not regarded. The word falls on their souls as seed falls on a beaten path; it is trampled under

foot or gathered up by the fowls; it does not take root and bear fruit.

Examine yourselves in this regard! Remember that not only the open enemies of Christ are wayside hearers, but that we may belong to that unhappy class while we seem to be His friends. We are against Him as long as we walk not and work not with Him; and when we coldly come and coldly go, without any interest in the souls of men and the work of the Church, we have reason to inquire whether our hearts are not obstinate in their resistance of the Holy Spirit. "To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts!"

2. The cause of this hardened condition of the soul is the repeated rejection of the Word of God, which is meant for man's enlightenment and salvation. By nature we are all opposed to the grace that can alone save us; the carnal mind is enmity against God. But we are not on that account all wayside hearers. When the Gospel comes to the souls of men, it has power in it to soften and subdue them. Some men are brought by it to believe in Jesus and rejoice in the hope of glory. The Word takes root, although the soil was not in good condition to receive it. The grace that comes by the Word puts it into a good condition. But some refuse to let that grace exert any power over the soul. They close their hearts against it. The Spirit appeals again and again. The appeal is resisted. When this continues the heart becomes harder and harder, and the appeals have less and less force, until the Word merely falls on the hard heart as the seeds fall on the trodden path. The fault is of course in man, that he treats so lightly the saving grace and so stubbornly closes his heart against it.

To bring about such a condition of hardening is Satan's interest and delight, and he is therefore ever busy in that direction. Therefore he steals away the seed

sown, preventing men from seeing their sinful and ruined condition, and also from perceiving the merciful and precious remedy supplied in our Lord Jesus. Hence he fosters our pride, that we may be led to a fond conceit of our own virtue and strength and thus to the rejection of all help offered us by grace. Hence he extenuates and minifies sin, making it appear at best as a fault in human nature that cannot be helped and that cannot be so dreadful in its consequences; but he extenuates it only until he has enticed us into it, when, if we show uneasiness and signs of repentance, he magnifies it for the purpose of driving us to despair. Hence he sets on foot all sorts of humanitarian schemes and societies, the purpose of which is to inculcate the lie that human nature, if it only has a fair chance and is properly directed, can accomplish its own salvation, and does not need any supernatural power of grace nor any Redeemer. Hence when he cannot induce men to refuse hearing the Word entirely, or to make a mock of it when they do hear it, he endeavors to introduce damnable heresies, that thus the power of the Word may be hindered. If he can take the truth away from people's hearts, he is very willing that they shall hold and honor human traditions, which have no power to save, and is therefore glad when he can disseminate errors. Be on your guard. "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." 2 Tim. 4, 3. 4.

When we consider the purpose of Satan in stealing away from the soul of man the good seed sown, "lest they should believe and be saved," we see the importance of watching his movements and foiling his purpose by giving due heed to the Word. Do not let the devil pick up the seeds as they fall on your hearts: he means to ruin you

by taking away the word of life and hardening your hearts against it. O hear the Word: that Word will itself mellow the soil of your heart, and to the grief of Satan and the joy of angels the seed will spring up and bear blessed fruit.

II. The second class of hearers are the superficial. They are represented by the stony ground in our parable. "Some fell upon a rock, and as soon as it was sprung up it withered away, because it lacked moisture." "They on the rock are they which, when they hear, receive the Word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, but in time of temptation fall away."

1. The superficial Christians thus described were always abundant in the history of the Church, and abound now perhaps more than ever. There are theories in vogue that foster superficiality, and all the more is it necessary to warn against it. Those who belong to this class are not described as unbelievers or scoffers or indifferentists. They are different from the wayside hearers, in whose hearts the Word does not take root at all. They are like the thin soil spread over a rock, in which the seed takes quick root and makes a rapid growth, but in which the plant cannot long subsist. They are expressly said to receive the Word with joy and for a while to believe. They are people who have faith while it lasts, but whose faith is not sufficiently rooted to last through trials. Thus there are many who know how to speak fluently of the Christian's joys and hopes, and who love to talk about the blessedness of the Gospel, but who cannot be depended upon when there are sacrifices to be made or hardships to be endured in the Master's cause. It is not that their sweet experiences are all a sham and that they are but arrant hypocrites. There is some Christian conviction and sentiment on the surface of their souls, but it is shallow, and for lack of depth has no endurance. Such is the case

where the anxious bench system is adopted instead of the Bible plan of thorough instruction in the truth as given in Scripture. There may be a superficial faith underlying the joy expressed and the excitement manifested; but the plant of such shallow root and rapid growth must soon wither for lack of moisture. In time of temptation such superficial Christians fall. They are often loud and not infrequently boastful when all is well, but when adversity comes and the cross is to be borne, they have not strength enough for the trial. That is what renders such Christians a subject of solicitude, and what makes it necessary to be diligent in searching the Scriptures, that the Word may render the soil deeper in our hearts and fit us for the trial as well as for more fruit.

2. The cause of such superficiality is indicated by the stony ground. It must be kept in mind that all human hearts are by their sinful nature unprepared and unpromising soils for the Word of God. The heart is prepared by the Word itself. But that Word would make honest and good hearts of all to which it comes. Instead of this, however, some become like hard trodden ground, while others are mellowed on top, but do not get beyond that. Instead of having the whole pervaded by the grace of God and all rendered good soil, there is but little earth on the rock. The soul is content with mere sentimental Christianity that is incapable of enduring hardness. The ploughshare of the law has not gone deep enough, and sin has not become to the soul exceeding sinful. A more vigorous application of the law is necessary, and less fear of the pain which this may give. "Is not my Word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" Jer. 23, 29. This hammer must be applied, whether people like it or dislike it. The application is by no means pleasant, but it is wholesome. It worketh a godly sorrow not to be repented of. When

the law has done its work thoroughly, the Gospel will be the better able to perform its office. Many never fully appreciate the grace of God because they have never fully realized the sin for which it furnishes the remedy: they are not driven to the constant use of the Gospel, because they do not realize the terrors of the law and the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity. Let the law break the rock, and let not the wound of sin be healed but slightly. Know that sin brings damnation, and that our only possible way of escape is through Christ. Him hear; of Him learn daily, that your faith may be well rooted and able to endure the temptations of life.

III. The third class of hearers is composed of the wordly-minded, who are represented by the thorny places. "And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it." "That which fell among thorns are they which, when they have heard, go forth and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection."

1. It will be noticed that these persons are again not unbelievers or mockers at religion; but neither are they shallow Christians, like the second class, whose great lack is rooting and grounding in the truth. And yet they too incur danger. They too may fail to bear the requisite fruit, though the seed grow and have plenty of soil to strike deep root and become a strong plant. But in this case the danger is of a different sort. The ground that will produce a good crop of grain may also produce a good crop of weeds. And if the weeds are left to grow undisturbed they will become so thick and thrifty that the grain will have little chance to obtain nourishment and become strong. The thorns spring up and choke it, so that there is a luxuriant growth of weeds, but no wheat. This third class of hearers is therefore composed of people who have not failed to hear the Word, and have not despised it

when they heard it. They may still hear it, at least till the process of choking is accomplished by the thorns, and not despise it. They rather honor it, and never fail to speak respectfully, if not reverently of it. But they are people in whom the flesh is striving mightily for the mastery and gaining day by day, so that it will soon be predominant in them, unless its course is arrested. They are Christians, but Christians whose life is waning under the influence of worldliness, and who, if they turn not from the error of their way, will soon have a name to live while they are dead.

2. What is meant by the thorns which choke the good seed is not left to be surmised. "They are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life." The natural unbelief of the soul in regard to the providence and grace of a God that cares for us will easily lead to caring for ourselves and worrying about the future, because such care is not sufficient ground to feel easy about it. And as provision is to be made for the future, nothing seems to the natural man more reasonable than that he should lay up riches and have a good supply of means in store for the day of failure or calamity. And then there are so many amusements and recreations, pleasures of this life that may be indulged in without sin: why should we not enjoy them? Indeed, these things seem so reasonable and so commend themselves to the carnal common sense of mankind, that it is difficult to present the warning in a shape that will strike the conscience. And yet we must earnestly call to you, brethren, beware of these "cares and riches and pleasures of this life." Why, are we to rush through life recklessly, without giving due heed to our business and our character? Must we not provide for those whom God has committed to our care, and lay up all we can for the future? And must we not reject that somber view of Christianity that makes it merely a system

of monkery and moroseness? So it is asked, and sometimes the questions are put with an air of triumph which indicates no misgiving as to the logic underlying them. And yet the whole reasoning is full of fallacy, and often felt to be so by those who employ it. Be not deceived, brethren. We are not to lead reckless lives, and yet we are to be careful for nothing, because our cares are cast upon God, who careth for us. We are not to seek after riches, and yet we are to waste nothing that our Lord gives us. We are not to pursue the pleasures of this life, and yet "every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving." When the Word of God has led us to see in Jesus our treasure, we will be thankful to God for His unspeakable gift, and will despise no gift of His mercy, temporal or spiritual; but we will then permit no earthly care or treasure or pleasure to put that unspeakable gift into jeopardy. And that is what is here had in view. When earthly cares crowd in on us, when earthly riches entice us, when earthly pleasures allure us, the object which Satan seeks thus to accomplish is the separation of our hearts from the heavenly treasures. He would wean us away from the Word, and the spiritual wealth that is brought us in the Word. And that is the danger against which we must watch and pray. It is not safe to give way to cares about to-morrow as if there were no God to care for us. It is not safe to seek riches as if they could help us in the day of calamity or supply us with bread even though God should desire to withhold it. It is not safe to pursue earthly pleasures while earnest work is awaiting us, or while the Gospel is calling us to sober thought and vigilance. It is not safe, because these are ways which Satan uses to choke the Word out of our hearts and thus to compass our destruction as effectually as if we had rejected the Word.

O pause and consider, you who are living more for the

world and its glitter and glory than for the Lord that bought you, and turn with all your heart to Jesus, ere the thorns have choked the life out of you entirely. What shall it profit you, if you gain the whole world and lose your own soul? What if you have barns and coffers full, and if you do fare sumptuously every day, when any hour the voice may resound in your ears, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee?" This worldly-mindedness is one of the greatest of the evils at present affecting the Church. We do not live enough unto Him who died for us and rose again, but too much unto ourselves. We do not lay everything at Jesus' feet; we find too much delight in the things which are passing away and too little in the things that are eternal. Worldly business and pleasure and care engross our attention, so that the spiritual has little opportunity to take root and grow. Beware of these thorns that are meant to destroy the good seed. Dig them out. They hinder the growth of God's plants and prevent the bearing of fruit.

IV. Finally, there remains yet the class of good hearers, in whom the purpose of God in sowing the good seed is attained. "Other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundred fold." "That on the good ground are they which in an honest and good heart, having heard the Word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience."

1. It is hardly necessary to remind you, my brethren, that there is no good in man's heart by nature, and that when our Lord speaks about honest and good hearts, it is implied that His grace has made them so. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. These things are foolishness to the carnal mind. And yet the Word of God brings them to us for our reception. It does so notwithstanding all man's disability. For that Word brings light and power. It prepares the soil as well as

supplies the seed. All soils are naturally bad. No analogies between earthly and heavenly things are complete. The Word is like the seed sown in the field, the heart is like the ground upon which the seed falls. But there is a difference. The seed sown finds some ground trodden, some stony, some thorny, some good; the Word sown finds all unpropitious and unpromising, and renders the bad soil good. The power of God is in the Word, and it never comes to a soul without exercising some power. Not that it always results in honest and good hearts. That would be the unfailing result, if God were permitted to have His way and accomplish His will. But some resist until the heart becomes as hard as a trodden road; some are led to permit the Spirit's work in a small degree, so that a beginning is made in the divine life, but refuse to study further and receive further light, and therefore, not being rooted and grounded in the truth, they fall away when temptations come; some are brought to know the Savior and to confess His name, but not growing in grace and holiness they allow the weeds of care and wealth and pleasure to grow in their hearts, and choke the spiritual life; some are made humble, patient, persevering Christian hearers and workers, and the Word bears rich fruit. As law it serves to plough up the heart; as Gospel it brings seed and waters it with the dews of grace, so that the ground is gotten into good condition and planted by the same Word, which is given by inspiration of God, and which is the power of God unto salvation to all them that believe it. Only let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; only do not resist the operation of the Word as it gives you light and draws you to the Savior; only follow the motions of the Spirit in the power which the Spirit Himself supplies through the Word preached, and your hearts will become honest and good under the influence of the grace imparted, and you will bring forth fruit with patience.

2. That which characterizes this fourth class of hearers is their continuance in the Word and their persistence in hearing and learning the blessed tidings of salvation. They not only hear the Word, but keep it, and keeping it, they bring forth fruit with patience. Those do not keep it who reject it, or who for a while accept it, but in time of temptation fall away, or who let the thorns take it out of their souls. Only the last class keeps it, and only this brings fruit in patience. Their pleasure is to hear their good Shepherd's voice; their care is to be found in His fold doing His good and gracious will. Therefore they never without necessity absent themselves from the house of God, or neglect reading the Word. It is their daily bread; it is their daily comfort; it is their daily strength. In its power they resist the devil and renounce the world and keep under the flesh. From it they derive new power each day to serve the Lord and to carry on the conflict against all foes. Their faith clings to that unerring Word and is sure, whether reason can comprehend it or not, and in that Word they find an equally sure guide in the journey of life. Blessed are they who hear the Word of God and keep it!

Brethren, that Word is preached to you all the year round. And yet there is so much indifference among us, and where life has entered there is so much shallowness and so much worldliness. God offers us grace again today that it may be better with us—that we may bring forth fruit to the glory of His great name. Faith comes by hearing—life comes by hearing. Oh, hear more attentively and earnestly the word of life and salvation. Let the Word not be preached in vain. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. Amen.

Quinquagesima.

LUKE 18, 31–43.

Then He took unto Him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: and they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death; and the third day He shall rise again. And they understood none of these things; and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken. And it came to pass, that as He was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging: and hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. And he cried, saying, Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto Him: and when he was come near, He asked him saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? and he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight; thy faith hath saved thee. And immediatety he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.

Dear Brethren:

The season of Lent is approaching. It is the time in which the Church calls her members to meditation upon the sufferings of our Lord, that they may be weaned away from the cares and pleasures of the world, by which they are so likely to become absorbed, and be won more thoroughly for the kingdom of God and the higher interests which it represents. It is a travesty of the high purpose of the Church to inaugurate a carnival such as is customary in Romish countries, and make the entering upon a season of fasting the occasion of pampering the flesh in

surfeiting and drunkenness, by way of bidding farewell for a while to the luxurious indulgence. But it is right and proper and salutary to withdraw for a season from the usual pursuits and pleasures of life for the purpose of giving special attention to the things of the soul. It is this that the Church has in view in her observance of Lent, and it is a fitting preparation for this to meditate on

CHRIST'S LAST JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM.

We consider 1. *How He went to suffer;* 2. *How He manifested His mercy;* 3. *How little His love was understood.* May the Lord bless our meditation.

I. "Then he took unto Him the twelve and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on; and they shall scourge Him and put Him to death; and the third day He shall rise again." It is an amazing program that is thus presented. The thing is too wonderful to impress human reason as real. But so it was foretold centuries before, and so it was realized in the fullness of time.

1. Prophets of God had predicted these wonderful things centuries before, and what God had foretold must surely come to pass. "All things that are written by the prophets shall be accomplished." Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and what they declared could not fail to be accomplished, because it was God's will that was revealed and God's truth that must be maintained and evinced.

The wonderful things which are here stated were all foretold and must now be fulfilled. The Lord had gone up to Jerusalem a number of times before, and there seems

therefore nothing extraordinary in that journey. But it was not now as on former occasions. The time had come in which the great events foretold should be realized for the salvation of man. Now the going up to Jerusalem was coupled with the accomplishment of the prophecies concerning the Son of man. What is said in our text was all predicted by the Holy Ghost through the mouth of prophets long before. It was said, with reference to the betrayal into the hands of the Gentiles, "Mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." Ps. 41, 9. "And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver." Zech. 11, 12. It had been written by the prophet, "The stone which the builders rejected is become the head stone of the corner." Ps. 118, 22. He was to suffer cruel scorn and mockery, as the psalmist says: "All they that see me laugh me to scorn; they shoot out the lip." Ps. 22, 7. How our Lord was to suffer and die Isaiah declares in the 53. chapter of his prophecy, where the dreadful scene is described, as if by an eye witness of things which had already occurred.

2. And all these things must necessarily come to pass. God had declared that so it would be; and so it must be, because His Word is always fulfilled. "Heaven and earth shall pass away," saith the Lord, "but my words shall not pass away." Matt. 24, 25. God in His mercy had determined upon everything that was needed for man's deliverance from death, and had declared this to man through the prophets. He had purposed man's salvation and foretold all the events that were necessary for its accomplishment. And of these things nothing could fail. God's purposes are always executed, and His declarations are always fulfilled. He would not be the God of truth if anything failed of all that He has resolved or foretold.

The events spoken of in our text all came to pass in exact accordance with the predictions. The things that are written concerning the Son of man were accomplished. Thus St. Peter declared: "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know,—Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain; whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it." Acts 2, 22–24. According to the prophecy He was delivered unto the Gentiles. Through the betrayal of Judas He was brought into the power of the chief priests and elders, and when "these had bound Him, they led Him away to Pontius Pilate the governor." Matt. 27, 2. Then the Lamb of God was maltreated in every form. He was mocked, as the evangelist narrates: "When they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they bowed the knee before Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews." Matt. 27, 29. He was spitefully entreated; for we are told that when they had led Jesus before the high priest and the false witnesses failed, because of disagreement in their lying testimony, to create an appearance of guilt, "some began to spit on Him and to cover His face and to buffet Him and to say unto Him, Prophesy; and the servants did strike Him with the palms of their hands." Mark 14, 65. Further, St. Mark relates that "Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them and delivered Jesus, when He had scourged Him, to be crucified." Mark 15, 15. And they led Him out to a place called Golgatha and put Him to death on the cross. "The sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. And when Jesus had cried with a loud

voice, He said, Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit; and having said thus, He gave up the Ghost." Luke 23, 45. 46. But He did not remain in death. As it is written in our text, He rose again on the third day. The angel told the terrified women who came to the grave on Sunday morning after the Friday of the crucifixion, and found that the body of the Lord was gone, "Be not affrighted; ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: He is risen; He is not here; behold the place where they laid Him." Mark 16, 6. Every word was fulfilled as the prophets had spoken it before, and as the Savior now repeated it to His disciples.

It was not with the joyous mood of those who go to witness a pageant or sit at a feast that our Lord went up to Jerusalem. The things that were written concerning the Son of man by the prophets stood before His vision, and these things formed a picture most sorrowful and most forbidding. He had suffered much in the 33 years of loving service which He had rendered mankind, and now His heart was heavy as He looked toward the holy city and saw only cruel scorn and bitter mockery and ignominious death awaiting Him. And in the prospect of all the shame and all the pain He goes with an unfaltering heart. "All that is written concerning the Son of man by the prophets shall be accomplished." And why enter upon such agonies and such a death? Why not rather choose the way of ease and comfort and, by evading the ignominy and death, foil the hateful foe, rescue innocence, and maintain justice? Ah, brethren, those who speak so know not what they say. Then all human hopes would be without foundation and our lost race would only sink into dark and endless despair. Then there would be no salvation for sinners, and justice would be done by consigning us all to the eternal fires prepared for the devil and his angels. He could have escaped all the suffering and entered into

the bliss which was His from eternity. But he came to save us; and to accomplish that end the prophecies concerning His sorrows and agony and death must all be fulfilled. And now He goes up to Jerusalem for their fulfillment. Behold, what love the Lord hath to us! Have we not reason for saying that it is a journey of mercy? Let us then consider

II. How He showed mercy. We see this in the miracle which He performed on the way, and in the purpose which He had in view in undertaking a journey that was to end in such suffering.

1. When our Lord was near Jericho a blind man, who sat by the way side begging, asked Him for help. A throng of people attended the Savior, whose miracles and whose teaching had now attracted general attention throughout the country. The rustling and noise of the crowd excited the attention of the blind beggar, and he asked the meaning of it. He was told that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. Probably he had heard of this man before, as His fame was spread through all Judea and even to people beyond the land of promise. But whether he knew of Jesus before or not, it is certain that he now knew enough about Him to believe and be assured that He could give the needed help in his sad case. He therefore cried to Him "saying, Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace." They no doubt thought that the great Prophet did not want to be molested by a wayside beggar, and that it was highly improper to impede His progress by petty cries for individual assistance. But the individual whose heart is bruised cannot think his sufferings a mere trifle, though he be but one of millions, and the blind beggar, confident that the Lord knew all and pitied all, "cried so much the more, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." He had not miscalculated; faith is not likely to miscalculate when it

relies upon the magnitude of the Savior's mercy. The servants in their narrowness may think the sufferings of one bleeding heart, especially the bleeding heart of a poor blind beggar, to be unworthy of notice by a mighty prophet, whom multitudes follow and to whom multitudes cry for help; but not so the merciful Master, whose heart too hath bled, and who knows what suffering is. "Jesus stood and commanded him to be brought unto Him; and when He was come near, He asked him, saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight; thy faith hath saved thee." It was a mighty manifestation of the Savior's power, but it was more than that. It was a glorious manifestation of the Savior's mercy, showing that however poor and forsaken the petitioner is that comes to Him, he shall in no wise be cast out. Trust in Him at all times; trust in Him when men pronounce it useless to trust; trust in Him even when followers of Jesus think it improper to press your suit. Help will surely come, for the dear Lord's mercy is boundless and endureth forever. "He that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about." Ps. 32, 10. "Trust in Him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before Him: God is a refuge for us." Ps. 63, 8.

This Savior is passing by where we sit in our blindness every day: shall we not avail ourselves of His mercy? Some do not even see that He is the Son of the living God and that there is full and free salvation in His name. They have heard that Jesus of Nazareth can help, and lo! He is now passing through our city. Why will you not, O ye that do not see the salvation that gladdens the hearts of so many, why will you not come to Him, about whom you have heard so much, and trust your sad case of blindness in His hands? Come and see; come to the Word, and that which sets before you the glorious things

to be seen will enable you to see! And ye who have seen by faith the Lamb of God, but find so much still that is dark and that perplexes, why not come to Him—why not, instead of increasing your perplexities by the science and the philosophy of this world, which is all good and all praiseworthy so long as only things of this earth and this life are in question, why not go to Jesus, and have all your problems solved in the light of eternity and your eyes opened to look beyond the grave? Thou Son of David, have mercy on us! Lord, that we may receive our sight!

The blind beggar received his sight, and was glad. But he did not forget, as so many forget, the mercy that was shown him and the Lord that showed mercy. "Immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God." That was surely what gratitude required. He showed by this the sincerity and depth of his faith. But what shall we say of those among us who receive spiritual insight, and forget that they were blind and that they see only by the grace of that same Savior? Do we not all too much forget the source of all spiritual light and all spiritual sight? O brethren, let us not forget the dear Lord that opened our eyes and enabled us to see the beauties of the law and the glories of the Gospel, and above all enabled us to see Him as the Savior of our souls. And as we see the continuance of this mercy among us from day to day and year to year, let us see that we appreciate it better, and join those of whom our text says: "All the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God." The Lord has done great things among us and for us also: let us give praise unto God.

2. But He shows His mercy in still grander form in the purpose of His journey, with the terrible sufferings in prospect. He went to His death, though He deserved nothing but gratitude at the hands of all men. There was no guile found in His mouth; no one could convince Him

of sin; He went about doing good, always and to all. Death is the wages of sin, which He had not deserved. And yet He goes up to His death. And not only death, but death in its most shameful and its most painful form He goes to endure. How explain the mystery? It is not difficult to explain, my brethren. It is very plain to them that have their blindness removed and that read the Scriptures. "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world!" The Son of man became the substitute for us. He takes our sins on Himself and dies in our stead, as on account of these sins we had deserved to die. That explains it all. "Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Isa. 53, 4–6. All that He suffered was our desert, was due to us. But He must bear it all, if we are to escape the eternal death which must come on us on account of sin, unless deliverance is effected. Jesus came to deliver us from our terrible doom, and He does not shrink from the stupendous work when it comes to the test of suffering and death. He knows what is written by the prophets concerning the Son of man, and He goes to Jerusalem that all may be accomplished. It was a bitter cup, but He undertook to drain it for the sake of the great love which He has to men; and now, when the set time for the suffering has come, He is the same loving Savior and is ready. "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" John 18, 11. To this end had He put on our nature, that He might assume our suffering and endure our death, and now the hour had come and He was prepared for the trial. He went to fulfill all that was

requisite for our salvation. He went to pass through all the contumely and agony and death which our sin had caused, and He shows the infinitude of His mercy in going up to Jerusalem on such a marvelous mission.

> Christ, the life of all the living,
> Christ, the Death of death, our foe,
> Who Thyself for us once giving
> To the darkest depths of woe,
> Patiently didst yield Thy breath
> But to save my soul from death:
> Thousand, thousand thanks shall be,
> Blessed Jesus, brought to Thee!

III. But while our Lord went on a journey to Jerusalem with the purpose of suffering as the prophets had foretold, and of showing His mercy to men in such suffering, those for whom it was endured had but little appreciation of it, and by no means have an adequate appreciation of it now. This point requires a few words before we conclude.

1. "They understood none of these things; and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken." That is a remarkable statement. The words surely are plain enough. Language could not more clearly express facts than is done here. Our Lord shall be given into the hands of the heathen; He shall be mocked; He shall be spitefully entreated; He shall be scourged; He shall be put to death. The disciples thought of an earthly kingdom of Christ with which all these things are inconsistent. Hence they do not understand them. Even to those who have no such opinions the statements might seem unintelligible. Can it be that our dear Lord, who is the mighty Savior of mankind, who is God over all, blessed forever, shall be thus shamefully treated and finally murdered? Can it be that those

for whom He became incarnate and whom He came to save from sin and death, should turn against Him and thus maltreat Him? Can it be that the Lord God Omnipotent should permit such an outrage as that of spitting on and scourging and crucifying the Savior, if any should be found wanton and wicked enough to undertake the unutterable crime? That is the consideration that makes the language unintelligible to the disciples. It cannot be, they assume, that these shocking things shall be conceived; the thought is not to be tolerated that they shall be executed, against our blessed Lord; therefore "they understood none of these things." Whatever the dark and ominous words may mean, they cannot mean that our Lord shall be literally spit upon and scourged and slain. That be far from Thee, Lord! Alas, that the disciples allowed their reason, which is the light so much boasted of by the wise of this world, to darken their mind, so that they could not understand the import of the plainest language! No, brethren, it was not any special decree of Jehovah that closed their eyes against things so plain, but it was their own blind reason. These things were hidden from their eyes, not because God did not create them to see, and not because He had not given them sufficient light to see, but because they thought they saw before, and therefore declined to look at things in the light which His Word cast upon them. They thought that they saw enough, at any rate, to be sure that their Lord could not be so spitefully entreated and could not be murdered by His foes, especially as that, in the estimation of their reason, would thwart the whole purpose of His coming. No, what the words say could not be, in their estimation, and therefore they understood none of these things, and they were hid from their eyes.

2. And so it is but too often now. The same thing is repeated year after year. In the blessed revelation

which God has given us everything is clearly set down and set out. The truth is made plain. And yet many people do not understand these things, but they are hid from their eyes, though they are set forth in the plainest language that can be used, and put in the clearest light in which it is possible to set them. Nor do they stop at that. It would be well if that were the limit of all deviation from the Word. It would be a blessed thing, if nothing more could be said of many than that they do not understand these things. That is bad enough, when the words are so plain. That even may be dangerous in many a case. But when men conclude that, because what the words of our Lord say seems impossible to their reason or to their feelings, therefore these things are not only not understood, but that the words must be denied, or twisted into a sense that is foreign to their ordinary import, the case becomes a great deal worse. Then not only do men hesitate and fear that they will accept what, because it seems unreasonable, may prove to be not the meaning of plain words, but they decide that what the words say is false, and they will not accept it. Thus men still reason about the Trinity, and the two natures in the adorable person of the Son of God, and the resurrection of the body, and thus they still argue about regeneration by baptism and the real presence of the Lord's body in the Holy Supper. It would be bad enough if men who profess to be Christians should say that they do not understand these things, when it is declared that the Father and the Son are one, or that the body and the blood of Christ are administered in the holy Sacrament, but it is very sad when they deny what the words declare, claiming to understand the matter from natural sources sufficiently well to correct the declaration made in the supernatural revelation. It is very sad, because in this way the whole authority of the Word of God is undermined, and we have virtually nothing but blind

reason to guide us, which, in spiritual things not only cannot see, but, imagining that it does see, leads to destruction. Therefore hear the Word, and be sure that the Lord God means what He says and will surely execute it, though to our minds it seem unreasonable or impossible. Nothing is impossible with God, and our thoughts are not His thoughts. Trust in His Word, and He surely will bring it to pass, though it be marvelous in our eyes.

It is marvelous in our eyes that the Lord Jesus was willing to take upon Himself our sin and our sorrow, and that He died to rescue us from death. It is marvelous. But it is true. Oh my brethren, it is not a dream, it is not an illusion. It is even so. Christ suffered and died for us, that we might escape the everlasting suffering and death that was due to our sins. He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. 2. Cor. 5, 21. O let us embrace the precious truth, and not have it said that we understand none of these things, and that they are hidden from our eyes. Lord, grant that we may know the truth and have life through Thy name. Amen.

First Sunday in Lent—Invocavit.

MATT. 4, 1–11.

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterward ahungered. And when the tempter came to Him, he said, If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Then the devil taketh Him up into the holy city, and setteth Him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee: and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto Him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again, the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth Him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him.

My Dear Brethren:

Our first parents were led to depart from God and His Word by the seduction of the devil. This arch-enemy of man cast doubts upon the truth of our Maker's words, and thus brought about that disobedience which is the cause of all our woe. Adam fell, and that was the fall of humanity from the high estate in which it was created. "By one man sin entered into the world," says St. Paul, "and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Rom. 5, 12. The ruin of our race was thus complete. But God is merciful and still desired man's happiness. He therefore devised that wondrous

plan of salvation which is revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures and which is the sum of the Gospel preached among us. The announcement of this divine interposition for our deliverance was made soon after the fall, in order that man might have hope. God said to the serpent, which was the devil: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Gen. 3, 15. This seed is Christ. He bruised the serpent's head and delivered us from death and hell. But in order to do this He must meet the enemy and overcome him. Our Gospel to-day describes one of the conflicts in the great war that was waged for man's rescue. It shows us how the second Adam was tempted, like the first; but how, unlike the first, the second Adam overcame the foe. "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." As the devil had been successful in the temptation of our first parents and obtained the victory over man, so it was needful that our Redeemer should be tempted and obtain the victory over the devil. Therefore the Spirit Himself led Him into the wilderness to endure the conflict with Satan and overcome the wily and wicked enemy of man and all righteousness.

THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST

invites our earnest consideration. Let us give due attention to 1. *Its Nature* and 2. *Its Object.*

I. Our text, in the first place, shows us THE NATURE OF THE TEMPTATION to which our Lord submitted. Satan made three distinct attacks upon Him, and was foiled in them all and finally routed.

1. He began by an attempt to induce our Lord to doubt His Father's love and distrust His Father's care. When Jesus "had fasted forty days and forty nights He

was afterward ahungered. And when the tempter came to Him he said, If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." The time was artfully chosen. Our Lord had been fasting forty days, and as He was a man like unto us, sin only excepted, He was now hungry. He had the power to supply the bread for which His human nature craved. Why should He not, since in the ordinary course of divine providence the needful nourishment was not furnished, exercise His miraculous power and satisfy His hunger? The suggestion looks reasonable. "If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." But God had declared Jesus to be His Son, and it was God's will that this Son of His love should fast, and trust His Father's love and care even when He was hungry and had no bread. It might seem harmless to use His power to relieve a pressing want; but it could have been done only if Jesus had permitted doubts to enter His mind respecting the paternal care that was over Him and that could permit no evil to befall Him. "If Thou be the Son of God"—that is the condition on which the conclusion depends. It is as though Satan would say: You have been declared to be the Son of God; but do you not see that God has forsaken you? Would He let you suffer hunger if you were His beloved Son? Cast away such confidence. And if you are His Son, prove it by helping yourself out of the present distress, since other help is not rendered. In every way the tempter sought to insinuate doubt into the mind of our blessed Savior. But "He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." These words are written in Deuteronomy 8, 3. They show that all depends upon the will and word of the Maker of all, and that under all circumstances that word is to be trusted. Bread is indeed the ordinary means of sustaining life, and

is therefore usually regarded as necessary to this end. But it is such means only because this is the will of God and the Word of God has therefore so appointed it. If God so please, the end can be attained without this means. God can sustain life as well without bread as with it, if this be His sovereign will. Hence man lives not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Our Lord has His Father's Word, and is content to leave the ways and means of fulfilling it to the Father's wisdom and love. He need not make bread of the stones; He can live without bread if the Father so wills. He would not cast away His confidence in His Father's love and care, and Satan was defeated.

2. But he was not ready to abandon his purpose. Failing in his effort to lead our Savior to doubt and distrust, he endeavors to lure Him into the opposite sin of presumption and tempting God. And as our Lord had used against him the words of Holy Scripture, he artfully seeks to employ the same means for the accomplishment of his nefarious purpose. "Then the devil taketh Him up into the holy city and setteth Him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto Him, if Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down; for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee; and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord Thy God." Our Lord had expressed His trust in His Father's Word. Of that weapon the devil can make use also when it serves his purpose. Therefore he refers to what is written in the 91. Psalm. His suggestion is that if Jesus has such confidence in the Word of God, He should manifest it by throwing Himself down from the pinnacle on which they stood; for

God has promised protection to His children, and if He is the Son of God no harm could befall Him. That too seems reasonable. If our Lord could trust God to sustain life when He was hungry and had no bread, why should He not trust God to keep Him free from harm if He hurled Himself from the temple into the depth below? The Word of God could sustain Him in both cases, and was not protection against any danger promised as well as the supply of needful nourishment? The reasoning is plausible. But it is based upon a misinterpretation of Scripture. What Satan wanted was that our Lord should unnecessarily put Himself into danger and thus tempt God. He wanted Jesus to do what God forbids, and then presumptuously to trust that God would deliver Him from the death into which He was plunging by His own choice. For such trust there is no ground in the passage cited. It does not say that one who needlessly rushes into ruin will be preserved from it by an interposition of divine power. It is sinful pride, not humble faith, that impels men to incur dangers only to show how God will favor them by a wonderful deliverance. In the path of duty we can rely on God's protection, whatever may be the perils through which we must pass; but in the path of presumption we must expect to perish. God will not be tempted to help us against His own order and warning. Therefore Satan is again driven from the field by the words of Scripture, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord Thy God," which show how the devil had misapplied the words of the psalmist. If we put our trust in God and walk in His ways we are safe; but if we choose our own path, in opposition to the Word of God, we are merely tempting Him to accommodate Himself to our will when we presume upon His help from the perils into which we plunge. He will not be induced to follow us with His help when we refuse to follow Him in the way of safety. Our Lord con-

tinued in the ways of God and His Word, and Satan was again discomfited.

3. But still he was not ready to abandon his enterprise. He knows how much depends upon his success in this conflict. His kingdom is at stake. Therefore he makes a third attempt. "Again the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and saith unto Him, all these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me." All the riches and glory of the world,—how these attract poor, sinful humanity! The temptation seems great as the eyes of our fallen nature contemplate the magnificent offer. But our Lord is not to be misled by such vain honors and pleasures. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, and He alone can give the glory that is lasting. Fall down and worship the devil! What a price to be paid for the transient gift which the lying prince of this world is able to bestow! Satan seems to have become desperate. At first he appeared as an angel of light, who solicited only what seemed reasonable and right; now he exposes his rebellion and his wickedness. Therefore Jesus saith unto him, "Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." The solicitation to idolatry can come only from the pronounced foe of God and all righteousness, and he who would comply must sin against the first and the great commandment. The holy Jesus therefore bids the devil depart, and the victory over him was won. "Then the devil leaveth Him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him." The Savior remained unshaken in His trust, and His wants were supplied. He endured the temptation and triumphed over the tempter, who acknowledged his defeat and departed.

II. The blessing of this for us and for all men be-

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comes apparent when we consider THE OBJECT OF THE TEMPTATION. He was tempted for our benefit, that His victory might be ours and that His example might guide us in our conflicts with the tempter, who, having failed to overcome our race in Christ, its representative, still continues his malicious efforts upon men as individuals, seeking to deprive them of the victory secured by their Head.

1. The victory gained by our Lord was for the human race. Satan attacked mankind in Adam, and when he fell the deadly purpose of bringing ruin upon our race was accomplished. In Adam humanity fell, and all was lost. Christ is the second Adam, who came to restore us. In Him mankind was to have a new trial. Therefore Satan's attack upon our Lord was fierce and desperate. If He too could have been led into sin, the whole plan of salvation by a new creation in Christ Jesus would have been a failure. If He as our representative stood firm against all the power and all the wiles of the devil, there would still be hope for lost souls. He submitted to the temptations recorded in our text, as He came to do the will of God in all respects, and was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He met the enemy, and gloriously triumphed. That was the triumph of humanity, and thus the Savior began to undo the work which the devil had done for our destruction in the temptation and fall of our first parents. As the first Adam's fall was our loss, the second Adam's triumph was our gain. The victory won was for our benefit, and when we apprehend the Savior by faith all that His faithfulness won is ours. "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. 15, 57. He was our substitute in His conflict with Satan and in His conquest, and when we believe in Him we have personal part in all His achievement and triumph.

And as His victory avails for us and for all men, and is actually ours through faith in His name, all His right-

eousness and merit being imputed to them that believe, so too by embracing Him we are made strong to resist the attacks which are still made upon us as individual members of that race that fell in Adam and triumphed in Christ. He is our life and our strength; of ourselves we can do nothing. Even though the Savior endured temptation and suffered and died for us, we could not escape from Satan, into whose power we have fallen through the victory which he gained over Adam, without the grace of our Lord Jesus to deliver us and sustain us. Satan is conquered, and knows his conqueror; and those who resist him in Jesus' name and in Jesus' strength shall not suffer defeat. "We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." Rom. 8, 37. But it is only through Him that loved us, our conquering Lord. If we enter into the conflict with Satan in reliance upon our own power, we must fall. He keeps us in bondage until the grace of our Lord delivers us through faith; and when that grace has been imparted and we share the victory which our Savior has won, we are still, as long as we remain in this wilderness of our probation, subject to the temptations of Satan, and must fall if we cease to cling by faith to our Deliverer and to resist in His strength alone. He who is our righteousness by faith is also our life, and only through Him we shall come off conquerors. But we have this confidence in Him, because He gained the victory for us and now by the Gospel offers us all its fruits. It is a glorious victory for us which faith appropriates; and those who appropriate it are thus made strong for the resistance of Satan's temptations and for the loving service of their Lord. They are equipped for the war, and they learn how to wage it from our Lord's example.

2. Christ's temptation shows us how we may expect to be tempted, and what course we must pursue to overcome the tempter.

As our Lord was tempted by the devil soon after His

baptism, so we, as soon as we are consecrated to God and receive His Holy Spirit by that sacrament of regeneration, are exposed to the temptations of the devil, who seeks to lead us away from Christ. Satan has pleasure only in the ruin of souls; and all godliness is displeasing to him. He hates the path of faith and charity, and endeavors by all means to entice the disciples of the Lord from that path. Even children are allured by him into evil ways; and as the baptized grow up, the temptations surround them on every side. These assume, generally, the same forms in which they were presented to the Lord, and in these various shapes we may expect to meet them.

They come, first, as an enticement to distrust of our Father's love and mercy. As the Savior was to be seduced to question whether He was the object of God's loving care, so we are tempted to doubt whether we are the children of God, for whom His love always amply provides. We are in want of many of life's enjoyments, which Providence freely bestows upon others; we are surrounded by foes, though we have striven faithfully to do our Father's will and to be kind and gentle towards all men; we are called to suffer manifold tribulations, and with many a groan to march onward upon the thorny road to glory above. If God were truly my Father and I indeed His child, would He permit this? Certainly, brethren; why not? This is His way: sufferings and crosses, and trials and troubles here below, in order that the dross may be purged away and we be like refined gold fitted for glory. We must not despair because God's ways are higher than ours. Man lives not by bread alone, but by God's Word; and if we do not have earthly goods in abundance around us, and have many sorrows, God has enough in His hands to distribute to us as we have need. But Satan would have us doubt whether we can be fed and clothed, if we do not see how this is to be done. He

would have us doubt whether God is kind, if He does not bestow gifts upon us according to the measure of our ignorant wishes and expectations, or whether we are beloved children of God when we have many sufferings. He will sustain us; and if we are enticed to take a dishonest or unfair course in order to gain necessaries or escape tribulations, it is the devil who thus tempts us; and the example of our Lord shows us how to resist the devil by holding firmly to the word of the Lord.

Secondly, Satan tempts us to presumption, if he does not succeed in introducing doubt and distrust into our minds. If we cannot be induced to believe that God is not loving and merciful enough to supply our wants, we may be induced to believe that He is so good and gracious as to grant us what we desire, even when our desires are sinful. To such presumption the devil tempts us as he did our Savior. God will help us according to His Word; but He will not help us against His promises. Some would presume upon their spiritual strength, and fear no danger; would enter into any temptation and never dread the consequences; would even sin on the presumption that they incur no peril, because they are God's children. That is Satan's work. Resist him, as the Savior did, by appealing to what is written in the Scriptures. Be assured that where there is sin, there is danger; and that foolhardiness leads to destruction. "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

Thirdly, if Satan fails to excite distrust or presumption in our minds, he makes the effort to lead us into idolatry and thus destroy us. Not that he always tries to convince us directly that God's Word is false: this will not always succeed. Sometimes he lets the words stand and steals away their sense, by which he accomplishes the same end. Against this, as well as against his other wiles, we must be always on our guard, remembering what our

Lord urges upon us, that we should always watch lest we enter into temptation. Beware, lest, while you suppose yourselves sincere worshipers of God, you bow down to Satan. Shun him, and his snares and his lies!

Our Lord's example shows us how to obtain the victory. He that would overcome the father of lies must stand firmly upon the truth, as this truth is given us in the Holy Scriptures. Christ was always ready to answer the devil with the word of God written in the Bible, which could not be gainsaid. This shows us the importance of an intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures. The more we know of these, the better we will be prepared to resist and rebuke Satan. Those who neglect the study of Scripture may be taken in snares, which could have been avoided if they had been more familiar with their Father's counsels and instructions. Without this Word we are lost: with it we are able to give a reason for our hope, and a rebuke to those who deny it. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; this will be your strength against temptations. It will make you stronger and will furnish you with the necessary means to refute the errors and lies of the great adversary, whose desire is to win souls away from Christ. Prayer is very needful: the Christian continues instant in it. Vigilance is very needful: The Christian will not neglect it. But his vigilance and his prayers will be what they should be only when the Word of God is faithfully used and studied as the great means of grace to edify ourselves, and as the great armory of weapons to break down the devil's strongholds. Let it be your study and delight therefore: let it always be a light to your path and a lamp to your feet. Let your meditation upon it be sweet: let it make you wiser and more earnest day by day: hold to it firmly in true faith that recognizes it as the infallible Word of God. Then in whatever shape Satan may come, you will be ready to re-

sist him. Whether he comes in the hideous forms in which he is sometimes painted, or in the beautiful garb of an angel of light which he sometimes wears, you will know him by his departure from the law and the testimony; and whether he strive to mislead you by false doctrine, or by ungodliness of life, you will be prepared to say: Get thee hence, Satan! In the strength of your Lord you will come off conquerors. God grant it! Amen.

Second Sunday in Lent—Reminiscere.

MATT. 15, 21–28.

Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But He answered her not a word. And His disciples besought Him, saying, Send her away: for she crieth after us. But He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshiped Him, saying, Lord, help me. But He answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

Dear Brethren:

On last Sunday we heard how our Lord was tempted of the devil. It was remarked then that His victory over Satan is actually our victory in faith, inasmuch as we receive the full benefit of it, just as though we had entered into the conflict and overcome, and also that it teaches us how to conquer when we are ourselves called to enter into the fight. The lesson to-day shows us one of the Lord's followers in the fiercest trial overcoming in the Master's strength, and again exhibits faith as the victory—faith in the Word, which the devil must let stand and get no thanks for it. By the examples recorded in the Scriptures we are to be prepared for the strife through which we also must pass, that we may run with patience the race set before us. And such preparation and patience are needful. There are pleasures forevermore with Jesus: He gives us crowns

and glory unspeakable: but not now—not yet. It is a confusion of time when we suppose that we should have that now which is laid up for us in heaven. But it is a dangerous confusion, because it leads us to overlook the actual state of things at present—to take no heed to those examples of battles and victories, which are written for our learning—and to cease from following after Jesus, because the way was not as easy as we had supposed, and the crown proved to be one of thorns, like the Master's! Let us wait: the path will be rosy and the crown bright enough, when we have once crossed the flood which rolls between us and the promised land. Until then let us watch and be sober, by God's grace, enduring the trial of our faith without faltering. And as a means to this end, let us prayerfully consider

THE TRIAL OF FAITH

which the Gospel lesson brings before us, that we may learn 1. *How faith is tried, and* 2. *Why faith is tried.*

I. How is faith tried? The example of the Canaanitish woman shows us this in some of its severest forms. We direct our attention to her trial, that we may not be taken by surprise when we see similar trials in ourselves or our neighbors.

1. Our Lord seems not to pay the least regard to the distressed woman's prayer. She came out to Him with a petition that was earnest and sincere. "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, Thou Son of David: my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." Everything tends to show most intense earnestness. And she prayed in faith also. She had heard of Jesus and believed the report. She had heard of Him, otherwise she would not have clung so tenaciously to Him in faith, for "faith comes by hearing," St. Paul says. Rom. 10, 17. She had heard

of Him, otherwise she could not have addressed Him as she did: "Thou Son of David," and could not have asked what she did: "Have mercy upon me!" She believed the report, without all controversy; for our Lord said unto her, when she had been proved sufficiently: "O woman, great is thy faith!" And yet, notwithstanding her faith and her deep earnestness, our Lord "answered her not a word." How wonderful—how very wonderful in the eyes of those who know the Lord as ever more ready to give than we are to ask, who know Him as a merciful Friend ever waiting to be gracious! And yet so it is: He answered her not a word.

How sore must have been this trial! True, He does not say to her nay; but His silence bears a construction even more discouraging than nay, if the woman had been disposed to put that construction upon it. She did not do so, because her faith did not fail her. Of the Lord's mercy and loving kindness she had heard, and she believed it with the strength of a divine power in the soul. Let appearances be as they may, His mercy must not be doubted. Therefore she still clung to Him: maybe He will answer yet: in any case He will not prove otherwise than merciful. This is the reasoning of faith—a reasoning that is perfectly sound, and that will bear any test: a reasoning proved in this instance, as in thousands of others, to be safe and sure. The trial was indeed sore, but the woman endured it without faltering.

And similar trials Christians are often required to bear. We do not refer to those manifold conditional petitions which we bring before God and which are never answered in the form desired because they were unwise petitions, the granting of which in such form would only be for our injury. Faith cannot be so severely tested by these, because the Christian knows when he offers them, that he has no absolute promise to which he can cling.

And yet even in such cases we may be tried. For if we have not special promises assuring us of the special gift asked for, we have general promises of God's mercy, and to our minds these may seem so necessarily to imply the granting of the particular thing requested, that its withholding may seem to us a refusal to hear our prayer. Care is of course necessary, in this respect, lest we entertain hopes which the mercies of God by no means arouse or encourage, and which therefore must be disappointed. Selfishness sometimes suggests the things which are asked of God, and faith cannot, where the light is permitted to shine in upon the soul, expect that the request will be granted. It is weak faith—faith lacking intelligence, which is proved so much in this way and which finds such a probation so very severe. A sound Christian will not think of denying God's mercy because his business was not as successful as he wished it to be, because he suffers many losses, because death even has come and cast a shadow upon his hearth. He may be sorrowful for this, but God cannot seem any the less kind and merciful to him. It is very weakness to think His mercy less sure, less complete, on this account. And yet who among us is not weak? Who does not at least sometimes suffer from such infirmity?

But we do not here refer merely or mainly to these, but rather to the trials which God sends us, and which are not merely self-made. Such are those in which we receive no answer immediately to prayers, the hearing of which we have a right to expect. We ask for something in the full assurance of hope—something that we perceive to be an actual blessing, not a curse. But often Jesus "answers us not a word." We see no change whatever; everything seems to be as it was before; and the promise to hear our prayers seems to have failed. And O, brethren, how prone are we, in such a case, to give over our cause as utterly lost—to cease our prayers as entirely useless!

What littleness of faith! Why this woman, with far less advantage than we, with far less opportunity to know the Lord's infinite mercy, did not faint. She was importunate, and Jesus loves our importunity. Let us only pray on in faith — pray without ceasing — pray on notwithstanding difficulties, and the object of our prayers will be reached at last.

Brethren, I am certain that we would be a richer congregation—richer in the treasures of knowledge and in good works, in faith and charity, in head and heart, in word and work,—if we prayed more fervently, and especially more importunately, not thinking of giving a thing up because it was not granted immediately, but praying again and again until we do obtain it, as this good woman did. And for this we have all-sufficient reason. For it is foolish and vain for us to suppose that we know best how, and where, and when, our prayer must be answered. Leave that to God, and be content. We ought to trust God that He knows these things best. And yet only this is needed in order to stand in such trial. Our prayers, if not heard immediately, will surely still be heard: only have patience to wait until the proper time comes. Of course, until then it seems to the flesh as though they would not be heard, and this constitutes the trial. Therefore do as this woman: be not discouraged, be importunate, and ye shall see what ye have believed.

2. Our Lord, when He does hear the woman, gives her a discouraging answer. She knew the Lord's mercy, and trusting it she continued her supplication. So importunate was she that the disciples were moved, and interceded for her. "His disciples came and besought Him, saying: Lord, send her away; for she crieth after us." Instead of being moved, however, to grant her request now, he only seemed to discourage her. He did, indeed, break the silence now; but it was only to make it seem-

ingly worse than before. "He answered and said: I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." This sounds like "Nay!" She was a heathen woman, not belonging to the chosen people. A lost sheep she was indeed, but not of the house of Israel. But only to the Israelites was the Savior sent primarily. What hope could she have then? It is true that these words would be grossly misunderstood, if we explained them to mean that no soul can be saved which belongs not to the Jewish people. We know that this is false. The Gospel of Christ is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth: to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Rom. 1, 16. Our Lord's ministry, in His own person, was for the Jews; the salvation is offered to the Jews first—first only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. This is the evident meaning of our Lord's words. Yet upon this announcement the woman, whose petition was not answered, would by nature have less hope than previously, although by grace she might have more. Naturally, humanly considered, there was only discouragement for her in our blessed Lord's answer. Had she heeded merely her reason or other natural powers, she would now have given over her pursuit of a cherished object, and wrung her hands in dark despair. But she had faith; and as it was still possible for the report which she had heard of our Lord to stand, she unflinchingly clung to it in spite of all. The trial was severe when she received no answer; it was severer still when she received this answer: but great was her faith.

And great should our faith be to endure similar trials. Not only may we seem to hear the Lord say, in reply to our petitions for earthly gifts, These are not for any, save the chosen ones, but even in regard to the greatest of all gifts, our own salvation, this may occur. Jesus died for me—what believer is not fully assured of this? and yet

the question may occur to believing souls, and often does present itself with alarming force: Am I really one of those whom Jesus purchased with His precious blood and whom He designs to save? I know He died for men, even for sinful men: but am not I too vile, too unworthy to claim a portion so divine? They seem to hear our Savior say: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel," by which they feel themselves excluded. Or if this cannot be made doubtful in their minds, that Christ actually died for them, Satan strives to shake their confidence in the divine Word respecting the conditions to be fulfilled. "Believe and be saved," seems very plain and very easy. But when men come to apply it there is danger that all kinds of ingredients will be mixed up with those simple elements which constitute faith. And Satan's purpose in introducing such confusion is to induce men, after all, to put some reliance in their own thoughts, or sentiments, or works, or anything, so that they may turn from Christ. Then the trouble will be whether they have fulfilled all the conditions under which we can claim that Jesus is our Lord and Savior. All the condition asked is that you know and feel your need of Him, then hold to Him as your refuge, your last resort, your only hope—and this holding is faith.

Hold fast to Him. This your faith may be sorely tried—the Lord may be pleased to test it severely, but He will not let you perish. It is such a trial when you do not feel joyful as you ought, when you feel forsaken and forlorn—when you feel wholly worthless. How unhappy are they who, when God permits such thoughts and feelings to enter the mind, take them for divine facts! Think of the poor woman, whom the Lord seemed to cast off, but who still held fast the word concerning His mercy which she had heard. Stick to the Word, until the storm be overpast: hold to the very letter, and with it defy all

doubts and fears, and then the trial, though severe, will not be your ruin, but prove the blessing which it is meant to be.

Even when the thought is insinuated by Satan that, though Christ died for you, you may not be among the chosen whom He designs eventually to save, you will have a refuge strong and sure in the Word of truth. For "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Rom. 8, 32. It is silly to suppose that Christ should die for us, then withhold the gift which is necessary to make that death available for the accomplishment of its purpose, which is our salvation. Therefore the question need not trouble us, whether we belong to the chosen people and whether therefore it is possible to be saved. All that believe are saved, and as Christ died for all, all are designed to believe and be saved. Christ died for me; how then could it be possible that He does not seek my salvation? It is enough to know that the Savior wants to save my sinful soul, as the Word assures me; and if there is much that I do not understand, I know this, that "He that believeth shall be saved." Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief. Only adhere to the loving Lord's Word, and He will lead you through the gloom to the sunshine.

3. Our Lord finally gives the woman an answer which is apparently a repulse. In her profound feeling of need, and her deep trust in the word which she had heard of Jesus, the poor woman ignores the discouraging reply, and as if nothing whatever had occurred to dishearten or distress, she came and "worshiped Him, saying, Lord, help me." It is as though she should say: Dear Lord, I do not understand these things so well; I am not able to explain how I may, notwithstanding all, be a recipient of Thy

mercy; but this I know, that Thou art good: O, help me! Hers is a case in which every tender heart must feel an interest; her woe is one with which all such hearts must sympathize. Surely, the Savior can hide His kind face no longer—cannot seem to dishearten the poor woman now! But He does—He does even more: He seems now to repulse her quite! "He answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs." This is substantially the same as that which He had said before, but apparently more harsh. As the Gentiles were uncircumcised, and thus outside of the covenant of promise, and as they were, moreover, given to idolatry, they were called dogs by the Jews. This expression our Lord here applies to the Gentile woman. All hope would thus seem to be entirely cut off; and yet the believing woman is not discouraged, as faith should never be. She feels her unworthiness, as believers always do; and in her sincere humility she admits all that the Lord's words seemed to her to say, and replied: "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." What meekness! O see, brethren, how lovely—how surpassingly lovely, true humility is! She claims to merit nothing. She admits that the children should be satisfied first; but she seems to say: Yea, Lord, the children's bread must not be taken away; I ask not this; especially for me must not a crust be taken, since I am so unworthy. But Thou didst compare me, in my poor estate, to a dog. Thou knowest, Lord, that even dogs are not driven away to starve—that even they are allowed to feed upon the crumbs which fall from the table. So let it be unto me! I ask not that any child should have one crumb less on my account; give me only that which falls from the table, and which is the portion for dogs: this will be enough for me—give me but this. And thus she found comfort in words that might have driven a weakling away. While the bread

must be offered first unto the Jews, yet there was and is an abundance for the Gentiles also. "Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour." "Said I not unto thee that if thou wouldest believe thou shouldest see the glory of God?" John 11, 40.

So there are trials enough in our Christian life still, which require steadfastness of faith until we can see the glory of God. It does appear sometimes now, also, as if prayers were met by a repulse. Sorrows sometimes come thick upon us and burdens lie heavy on us. We sigh for relief; we tell God our care and grief and perplexity; but, instead of relief comes a seeming rebuff. The clouds only grow darker, denser; the storm only howls more fiercely, more terribly; the troubles grow more gloomy, more discouraging. Everything seems to have turned against us: even God seems to have forsaken us. We read in His Word for comfort, and still we are downcast and disquieted. When such waves of trouble roll over us, the trial is indeed severe. But only hold fast to the word that God's goodness has not rejected thee, that the God of all mercy and grace will not leave thee nor forsake thee, and the time of joy will return. Say with the psalmist: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God." The storm will soon blow over; only endure, as the severely proved woman in our Gospel did, firm until the calamity be overpast.

II. To this we should be encouraged by our knowledge of the purpose of our trials. WHY IS FAITH TRIED? God, who "behind a frowning providence still hides a shining face," thus blesses us.

1. He strengthens our faith by the trial. He would have us understand the nature of faith, and give us oppor-

tunities of experiencing its power. For we are not only required to believe the truth in a general way, but to hold to the Word in spite of all opposition. Many a one thinks he has saving faith when he has nothing but a historical belief. Many a one thinks his faith is able to brave every storm, when the slightest difficulty shakes his trust in the divine promise. God strengthens this weakness by disclosing it to our hearts, and urging us in the trial to exercise our faith upon the Word which is sure; for the very object to which it clings contains the power to make it strong. He would have us cling to the Word at every hazard.

This unconditional adherence to the Word is what is lacking so often in our faith. We look to our sight, to our feelings, our fancies, to anything, except the Word, to make us sure. The Canaanitish woman would have yielded in despair, if she had looked merely to that which was before her eyes, rather than to that which she had heard of the Lord, and she became stronger by clinging to the Word, notwithstanding all appearances which tended to convict that Word of falsehood. So must we. Our weakness lies in turning from the proper object of faith. Let our coffers be filled with gold and our barns with grain, and it requires but little strength to rest contented that we shall have meat and drink to-morrow as to-day. And many a man may take his content for faith in God's providence and promise. But let poverty come upon some of these—let them be penniless and hungry, not knowing how they shall escape the jaws of starvation to-morrow, and it may be clear to them at once that they were resting under a delusion: that what they had supposed to be faith was merely sight. They trusted for their supply not in the goodness of God who promised it, but in the obvious abundance already in their possession. The disclosure of such a delusion is a blessing, and the trial discloses it.

So in regard to our souls. We may think all is well, that our salvation is quite sure because we feel well, and all moves along pleasantly. But many who think so may, when persecutions arise and pains are to be endured and battles are to be fought, feel miserable enough, and doubt whether they can be saved: some may fall away, not having sufficient root. They build their hopes rather upon their prosperity and consequent happiness of feeling than upon the word of grace. Where such a delusion prevails, it is again great mercy to disclose it, as the trial is intended to do; and where the weakness is taking root, that God's grace is to be measured by our feelings, it is again mercy to uproot it and lead us to the Word, to which we must cling always, and by clinging to which we are always safe. This blessing secured by trials is great, and we should therefore rather praise God for them than be disheartened.

2. He gives us opportunity to confess our faith in the trial for the advantage of others. We do not live for ourselves merely, but for others also. Whatever can be made serviceable to others should be so applied that they may be profited. Hence we are not to keep even our faith confined in our own bosoms, but are to confess it for the encouragement of others. This is done by our connection with the Church, and co-operation with it in its labors, and sympathy with it in its sufferings. The same end is accomplished when in severe trials we manifest our firmness by continuing in the faith. The disciples, who were witnesses of the woman's perseverance, could see the power of faith and be encouraged. Of course, to accomplish this end it is necessary that the trial should not result in our fall. If our probation were followed by a renunciation of the truth, the very reverse of good to men would be done: a testimony would be borne against the power of Christianity. Then men would say that it is all a vain boast, seeing that when troubles come those who profess

it flinch. But such cases as that of this woman of great faith preach powerful sermons in favor of the truth. They show that though there may be many shams, even among Christians, yet there is a divine power in faith. The disciples must have been strengthed by her heroic example: even to-day we are edified by its contemplation. This is a great blessing also: not indeed the chief end of our trials, but still an important end. And if by our troubles we gained nothing else than this, that by them we bear testimony anew to the power of grace, this would make the trials a blessing. But, as we have seen, we are also strengthening ourselves whilst in them we help to strengthen others.

3. And God confers still another blessing on us through the trial. Whilst He makes our faith strong through the exercise afforded, He bestows great blessings upon the strong faith. It seems wonderful, what our Lord says to the believing woman. We are tempted to explain it figuratively—to say it is a hyperbole. But it is literal truth, however marvelous it may sound. "Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Whatever true faith desires is always granted. For as faith always holds to the Word of God, and can be faith in the biblical sense only while it thus holds to the Word, it of course must attain its end. If we ask what God's Word promises, we cannot ask amiss, we cannot fail to receive what we ask. But if we ask what God's Word does not promise, it is plain we cannot ask it in faith. For we cannot believe anything as God's promise which He has not promised. And as faith only desires what is divinely promised, we can apply our Lord's words to the case of all believers: "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." So whenever God increases our faith, He increases our blessings, which faith apprehends. Thus every trial increases blessings, because it increases the faith by which they are appropriated. However severe the trials may

therefore seem at present, they eventually prove to be mercies. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time; wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." 1 Pet. 1, 3–7. The trials teach us to look to the Word, rather than to any shifting ground of human thought and feeling, and faith increases as it is exercised upon its proper object, the divine Word, and is blest as it grows. Therefore the Lord often mercifully tries us, not to dishearten and to discourage, but to bind our souls more firmly to His own gracious promises, which are Yea and Amen, and which are experienced to be so, if we remain faithful in the conflict.

Learn, then, from this example, to remain firm in your trust, and you shall be blest in your faith. Learn to expect trials, but also victories. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." 1 Pet. 4, 12–13. Only cling steadfastly to the Word, in every trial, in spite of all impediments and discouragements, and in due time you will be blest with the cheering words, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt!" Amen!

Third Sunday in Lent—Oculi.

LUKE 11, 14–28.

And He was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake; and the people wondered. But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub, the chief of the devils. And others, tempting Him, sought of Him a sign from heaven. But He, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself falleth. If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub. And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges. But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you. When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils. He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. And it came to pass, as He spake these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto Him, Blessed is the womb that bare Thee, and the paps which Thou hast sucked. But He said, Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it.

Beloved in the Lord:

On last Sunday we considered, in the Gospel lesson, an example of firm, unyielding faith, which clings to the plain declaration of the Lord, in spite of all obstacles, knowing that God's Word cannot contradict itself, and that therefore no appearances must be permitted to shake our trust in the divine promise, even though experience should seem to speak against it. But all men have not

faith like this. Some have not faith at all. Even some of those who have the means of grace, and therefore have this great gift offered them, do not believe. While the means of grace are always effectual to perform that whereunto God has sent them, not all men will allow them to produce the intended effect in their hearts. The grace of God is frequently offered in vain. This is manifest in our daily experience. Of the countless multitudes who are baptized and who hear the Word of God, some do not even profess to believe the Gospel; and of those who do, there are no doubt many whose profession is a mere pretense. There is opposition to the work of God—there is determined resistance to the Holy Ghost. This is shown us in many places of Scripture. It is shown us again in the Gospel lesson just read. Let us for our profit consider to-day:

HUMAN CONDUCT IN REFERENCE TO DIVINE TESTIMONY.

The text furnishes 1. *Testimony of Christ's Power*, and shows 2. *Man's Conduct Towards it.*

I. We find the Proof of Christ's Power in the casting out of the dumb devil, a record of which is given in the Gospel, and also in the expulsion of Satan from his seat in the soul.

1. He cast out a devil and it was dumb. At the time of our Savior's advent to crush the serpent's head and deliver men from his venomed fangs, the devil raged with unusual violence. It seemed as though he were making the final struggle of desperation to retain his kingdom, and God permitted him to manifest his malicious rage, that men might learn to know him as their arch-enemy, who would ruin their souls and bodies, if he could. He exercised his evil power upon the bodies and intellects, as well as upon the hearts of men. We read of people who were lunatics, or palsied, or dumb, by the possession of the

devil; that is, Satan not only influenced people morally and spiritually, as he still does, but also mentally and corporeally. So in the present instance. Here was a person who was dumb, but who was rendered so by the indwelling of a devil. Our Lord cast out this devil, and the dumb spake, so that the people wondered.

This manifests our Lord's divine power to destroy the works of the devil. It is almighty power directed by divine love, because it is the subjugation of the enemy of our souls, whose purpose it is to destroy both soul and body in hell, and the deliverance of those who deserved nothing at His hands but such destruction. "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armor, wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils." The devil is mighty in his palace, and fears no human foe. What though an innumerable host of armed men should march against him, and threaten to overthrow him! He fears no carnal forces: all men's artillery is nothing to him: against all human power his palace and his goods are safe. An invisible foe cannot be routed by visible force; a spiritual enemy cannot be overcome by carnal power. But when a stronger than the strong man comes, the latter's palace and goods are in danger. The devil is stronger than man, and fears no human assailant; but the Son of God is stronger than the devil, and overcomes him.

Herein lies the proof of His divine power and mission. Therefore He says: "If I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you." These things cannot be done by any human power; it would be absurd to suppose they are done by infernal power, as the purpose is to overthrow the infernal kingdom; therefore it must be by divine power. The kingdom of God must have come where, by the finger of

God, He performed His mighty works, which bear witness of Him as the Lord of all.

2. But He also casts out devils spiritually, and thus manifests His divine power. There are many who, although they are not possessed as persons frequently were during our Savior's visible ministry upon earth, are yet under the influence of the devil to an equally great, if not more dangerous extent. The teachings of Scripture assure us that man's wickedness originates in the devil, and those who live in wickedness live in servile obedience to the devil. "You hath ye quickened," says St. Paul, "who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Eph. 2, 1. 2. Our Savior teaches us that it is the devil that takes away the good seed of the Word which is sown, lest the hearers should believe and be saved. So also He tells the Jews who would not hear His Word: "Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." John 8, 44. Therefore He admonishes us to "put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." Eph. 6, 11.

It is evident from this that Satanic influences still continue in the world, although they may not be exerted physically now, at least not to the same extent as then. It is the devil, in every case, that worketh in the children of disobedience; and when persons are turned from darkness to light, it is by deposing the devil from his throne in the heart and letting Jesus in as King. It is Jesus that casts out the devil from the soul and breaks the slavish chains in which Satan had bound it. Our salvation cannot be effected without release from the devil's chains; and no power can save us but the almighty power of Christ. "Now is the judgment of this world," He tells us, "now shall the

prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." John 12, 31–2. If it manifests divine power to cast the devil out of the body, much more does it manifest divine power to expel him from the soul. And although this expulsion takes place through men also, who act in God's name and use His appointed means, yet the power is never man's but always God's, who merely uses men as His instruments. God's Word it is that contains God's power, whether God speaks it or man. When, therefore, our Savior says: "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee," He manifests the same divine power as when He says "take up thy bed and walk" to one sick of the palsy; for in both cases He shows His power over all things that exist, Satan not excepted. The testimony to our Savior's power and love is strong and clear.

II. What was Man's Conduct in Reference to this Testimony? This was various: some thought and did one thing, some another; and the contemplation of these diversities must be both interesting and instructive. Let us look at the various classes of persons exhibited in the text.

1. Some are bitter opponents, who make no secret of their opposition. In their malice they often cannot contain themselves, but rage furiously, and even go to desperate lengths. "Some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub, the chief of the devils." Enmity could suggest nothing more malicious than this, that while our Lord was casting out devils, He was Himself a mere emissary of the devil, acting by his power.

And thus some would rid themselves now of the conscience-troubling claims of Christ and the Church. There are those who still sneer at all evidences of truth, and impute the influence exerted to some evil powers and practices. When men's lives prove that an extraordinary power

has been exerted upon them by the divine testimony offered, the readiest way to evade the force of this evidence is to impute it all to wicked schemes: either that they have been deceived, or have themselves turned deceivers to subserve some purpose of their own. Therefore there are some who consider all godliness mere hypocrisy; and the more devoted the disciple, the more shrewd they suppose the deceiver. Others again, who will not consider all Christians as deceivers, doing all by the power of Beelzebub, still consider Beelzebub the main actor and factor in the case. While they are willing to admit that some ignorant ones are innocent and deserve our pity, they avow that the movers and leaders are misleading them for selfish ends. To them the Church seems a cunning institution by which the priests and prophets gain an easy livelihood. They regard humanity as all sufficient for its own salvation without any supernatural power, and a Masonic Lodge is just as much and just as good in their eyes as the Church of Jesus. To them, all that nature does not give and humanity does not in itself possess, is mere pretense at any rate. Such victims of the devil's wiles have always much to say about priestcraft and priest-ridden people; and whether what they say against the truth is plausible or not, it is some comfort to them to give vent to their stubborn hostility to the truth, which humbles men before it exalts them. If they can find nothing else to say they can always say this at least: they cast out devils through Beelzebub, the chief of the devils.

But how unreasonable all this is! Wonders may indeed be done by the devil's influence; this is not denied. When Moses performed miracles in Egypt we read that "the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments." Ex. 1, 11. So we read of Antichrist that his "coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all de-

ceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish." 2 Thess. 2, 9–10. But these lying wonders are performed for the purpose of building up Satan's kingdom and destroying that of Christ. Never do we find Satan giving power to do anything else but sin and harm. What he does must go against God's truth and kingdom; and when anything is opposed to these we have, indeed, every reason to think that, however wonderful it may be, it is done through Beelzebub, the chief of the devils. But when the devil is cast out, could anything be more absurd than the charge that the devil gave power to expel himself from his seat! Therefore our Lord said: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth. If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? Because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub." Their malice has run away with their reason; and their unreasonableness is made so clear that only wilful blindness can fail to see it. And that unreasonableness is further manifested by the fact that their children professed to cast out devils also, and in their case they never thought of raising the objection that all was done by Beelzebub's power. "And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges." That is, you have condemned yourselves, inasmuch as your bitter, unreasonable malice is evident from your condemnation of that in me which you find no fault with in your children.

And just as unreasonable are the railings of the Church's enemies in all time. When they say that the whole body of professed believers are mere hypocrites, who are actuated by selfish motives, they charge what even reason might declare absurd. Men have been persecuted from city to city for their Christian profession; have had their goods confiscated and been thrust penniless upon the

world; have gone through fire and water in furtherance of God's gracious plans; have suffered bodily and mental pain, such as those sneering foes would not dare to face. Nay, they have at the burning stake confessed their Lord, and when broken on the wheel or writhing on the rack, have been faithful unto death. Yet in the face of the noble army of martyrs, of whom the world was not worthy, and whose sufferings and death make all such infidel theories simply absurd, the scoffer continues his railing accusation that all this is done by the power of Beelzebub.

And as it is unreasonable to charge the whole body with hypocrisy, so it is also to assert that the leaders are deceivers and the led are deceived. It is of course unkind and uncharitable to accuse a body of men, such as are the ministers of the Church, of deceiving others, without offering any proof of the accusation. But kindness we cannot expect in enemies, and let this pass. Common sense, however, we might expect of them. But where is the reason in charging upon men who undergo more hardships for less earthly comfort than any other class of men with the same gifts and advantages, that they do this from selfish motives? Is it selfishness for men to renounce all the comforts of home and society and accept the hardships of a missionary's life? Or is it mere selfishness that induces men, whose talents would secure them wealth in some other vocation, to witness for Christ, in much labor and amid many cares, where scarcely the ordinary comforts, sometimes hardly the necessaries of life are secured? The charge is preposterous and the malice is manifest.

2. Others are opponents who desire to seem neutral. These would not have the name, by any means, of being decided enemies of our Lord and His Church. They would feel offended if any one intimated that they have cast in their lot with the foes of Christianity. They would merely wait for more testimony — would merely move

slowly and cautiously in coming to a decision. "Others tempting Him sought of Him a sign from heaven." As if our Lord's words and works had not been an all-sufficient sign! These are the wise-seeming ones who set about matters very deliberately, and who deprecate all haste and rashness, especially in matters of religion. Meantime they would have credit with the friends of the truth of not being opposed to them, but they would also retain the credit with the decided opponents of being prudent men, who want better evidence.

So there are numbers now, who pretend to have no antipathy to the doctrines of the cross; who, on the contrary, seem very much inclined to embrace them, but who pretend to want more proof, that they may not take an important step in undue haste. Thus some suppose that if one rose from the dead and told people of the future world, they would believe, although they refuse to believe what God Himself tells them, whose word is certainly as authentic as any ghost's word could be made to appear. Some suppose that if a great marvel appeared in the clouds, some sign were given from heaven, all men would believe the heavenly vision, though no evidence could make it credible which we have not already to accredit all that the Holy Scriptures teach.

The delusion of such persons, who would appear neutral, is evident. "He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth." There is no such thing as neutrality here: either the Spirit guides us or Satan misguides us: there is no middle ground. The golden crown is held out to us: we either lay hold of it, or we reject it. There is no medium between embracing and renouncing. By nature our decision is already made: we are enemies of God by wicked hearts and wicked works. From this state of enmity the grace of God would deliver us. But before we are delivered we are not neutral; until

the deliverance has taken place we remain enemies. He that has not yet been rendered a friend, remains still a foe: he that is not for Christ is against Him. Here we have the works of God which are intended to establish the truth; these people reject the testimony: here we have the words of the Lord, coming with all the convincing power of the Spirit of truth who accompanies the Word; these people reject the testimony. How then can they be neutral! Why, what more do they want? If neither His words nor His works are admitted to have any convincing power, what could convince them? They are merely tempting God when they ask a sign from heaven. Let us beware, lest the devil delude us by urging deliberation and calm investigation, when he is actually leading us to ask a sign merely as an excuse for disregarding the abundant signs already given.

3. Others again are opponents who have become worse by falling from grace. "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places seeking rest: and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. And when he cometh he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he and taketh to him seven other spirits, more wicked than himself; and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first." They are those who once had been freed from the bondage of sin, but who neglected to watch and pray, and into whom therefore the ejected spirit returned, only with seven-fold force.

This is always the case with those who fall away; they become the fiercest enemies of that which they once professed to love. They become worse than they were before grace had reached them. This is owing to the fact that they must for a while keep conscience smothered until it ceases to molest them, and then Satan has accomplished

his end. The conscience then becomes seared as with a hot iron, and no longer lifts its voice in warning against wrong. The devil finds the house cleared thus, and his own way open to accomplish what he pleases. Hence we find apostates amongst the most violent opponents of the truth, as though their doom were to keep conscience quiet by leaving no room for its action.

But also in another respect the last state of such is worse than the first. Not only do they become more wicked and more violent, but their hopes of salvation are also destroyed. Not only have they less chance of being saved than when they yet followed Jesus in freedom from Satan's bonds, but they have less even than they had before they were brought to the Savior, who cast out the devil. "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify unto themselves the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame." Heb. 6, 4–6. They give themselves up to the devil, opposing all grace. O watch and pray, brethren, that Satan may not bring about your fall.

4. Some, finally, believe the testimony and become children of God by faith. "And it came to pass as He spake these words, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice and said unto Him, Blessed is the womb that bare Thee, and the paps which Thou hast sucked." She did this, no doubt, in the confidence that He was the Messiah; and although her understanding of the truth may have been defective as yet, still, the testimony was not rejected, but its force admitted.

And so it will ever be, wherever it is presented: this is our strong consolation amid the scornings and scoffings,

and the unkind insinuations of wicked men: some will always own the power of the truth, according to the Lord's cheering words: "As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth fruit and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." Is. 55, 10. 11. Some may mock, some may hesitate, but some will believe and be saved, the truth making them free by the power of Christ, and keeping them by that power unto eternal life.

And these are the blessed! Not she especially and exclusively who nursed the infant Jesus, but she and all they who believe on His name are blest. It would seem a great thing to be related to Him who performed such mighty deeds on earth; and it is so indeed; only that our relationship must be of a higher order than that by blood. "He said, Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it." For these are brothers and sisters of the Lord of Glory; and they have not only this name, but all the rights and titles of such. They are heirs of heaven and joint heirs with Jesus, the Only Begotten Son of the Father. We are blessed indeed, when the truth is brought to our souls and we hear the testimony of Jesus, if we embrace that truth and receive that testimony in the faith which is the evidence of things not seen. For he that believeth shall be saved; and blessed indeed are they who, when their earthly course is finished, are admitted into the mansions of the skies; "for eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of men the things that God has prepared for them that love Him." Amen!

Fourth Sunday in Lent — Laetare.

JOHN 6, 1–14.

After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed Him, because they saw His miracles which He did on them that were diseased. And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there He sat with His disciples. And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh. When Jesus then lifted up His eyes, and saw a great company come unto Him, He saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this He said to prove him: for He Himself knew what He would do. Philip answered Him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said unto Him, There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many? And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves; and when He had given thanks, He distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down: and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. When they were filled, He said unto His disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten. Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world.

Dear Brethren:

By grace are we saved through faith. Salvation is effected through our Lord Jesus, and faith is the means by which we get it. Christ died for all, but only those who believe have the benefits of His death. He is our Savior; we can do nothing towards saving ourselves; but He is ours only by faith. That is essential to salvation. Hence the declaration is repeated so often: "He that believeth

shall be saved." But hence too the great importance of being sure that we are believers. St. Paul accordingly admonishes all Christians: "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." 2 Cor. 13, 5. But if we would prove ourselves in regard to our faith, we should look as well to our trust in God's mercy and promises with regard to earthly as with regard to spiritual things. The ground of our faith must be the goodness and truth of our Lord, whose Word can never deceive, and there is accordingly the same reason for confiding in Him in regard to temporal supplies as there is in regard to the supply of the higher wants of our souls. If we do not trust Him in the earthly, how can we trust Him in the heavenly? That we may the better examine our condition, let us consider the truth that

THE BELIEVER TRUSTS JESUS ALSO IN TEMPORAL THINGS.

We shall consider 1. *The Ground* and 2. *The Effects* of such trust. Do Thou, Lord, enable us to confide in Thy Word, that in temporal as well as in spiritual things we may have the peace of God.

I. The Ground of such Confidence. Our Lord fed five thousand persons, though they could not see how, and He still supplies men's wants, whether they can see how it is done or not. He always has ways to exercise mercy and keep His promise.

1. A great company followed Jesus into a mountain. There they were in danger of suffering for want of provisions. What must be done to supply their wants? "Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?" was our Lord's question, propounded to prove His disciples.

At this question reason is perplexed. Philip can calculate how much it will take to feed so many hungry people.

Human reason is always ready with its calculations, and with doubting questions when the requisites, according to its calculations, are not visible. "Philip answered Him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little." Andrew can see something towards the supply in the few loaves and fishes that can be secured; but is ready also with the discouraging remark, that it is not worth while to begin with this mere mite. "One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto Him: There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?" Reason is utterly helpless—all human calculations are baffled here.

Without any reference to their difficulty, and putting to shame all their doubts and fears, Jesus commanded the men to sit down upon the grass. The multitude, consisting of about five thousand persons, obeyed. Then Jesus took the loaves and fishes, gave thanks to the bountiful Giver of all good gifts, and distributed to the disciples, and these again distributed to the people, and lo! all were filled. And not only were all fully satisfied, but the quantity which was left was marvelous. "When they were filled He said unto His disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which remained over and above unto them that had eaten." This was indeed a wonderful thing. The human mind is utterly nonplussed, and can only ask, How can these things be? And those who have no higher source of truth than mere nature must say these things cannot be. But they are, and they are marvelous in our eyes. And so were they to the eye-witnesses of this great miracle. "Then those men, when they had seen the miracle which Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet which should come into the world."

Here was a wonder wrought: bread was supplied in a manner above all that these people were able to ask or think; and the conclusion was natural: here is the mighty Prophet who was long since promised, because here mighty works, such as are foretold of Him when He should come, do show themselves forth in Him.

How He did this seemingly remarkable thing we do not know, except that He said, Let it be, and it was. The manner of omnipotent operation we cannot understand: what we have to do, is to believe and adore. What reason finds impossible, or, at least, very improbable, faith has no difficulty with when it is remembered that it is the Lord who does it. With God all things are possible. And the same Lord is our Lord.

2. He can and will feed His people still, though we see not how. He is still the almighty Maker of heaven and earth, upon whose power and love we can absolutely rely. And He has also promised to us our daily bread. Upon these promises our confidence rests: for whilst it is possible for us to be mistaken in our inferences from His power and mercy we cannot be deceived when we cling to specific assurances. We have reason to be confident in view of such words as these: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Matt. 6, 33. "I have been young and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." Ps. 37, 25. "Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." Matt. 7, 7–8. These, and numerous precious words of the same import, always give assurance to faith, whatever might occur in our lives to render the supply doubtful in the eye of reason.

Faith has good ground to rest upon, although the

evidence on which it is based is not that of sense. God is able to supply all our wants; His love is great towards us, and will prompt to such supply; and He has given us His promise that we shall not want. If we will not trust that promise and rest content that it shall be according to His Word, it is because we do not accept the testimony and assurance of God Himself, and that means that we do not believe. Then we are not willing to take God at His word. And if we do not trust His assurances in regard to temporal things, how can we trust Him in those things which pertain to the salvation of the soul? Rejection of His Word, distrust of His promise, is of course the want of faith. "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater." "He that believeth not God, hath made Him a liar." 1 John 5, 9. 10. Therefore our trust in God in regard to our daily bread will be a test by which to examine ourselves whether we be in the faith. He has promised to give us what we need, and if we do not regard this as certain, it is because we do not trust His Word.

Faith does not require any other ground of confidence than simply the Lord's pledge and promise. That may embrace, and often does embrace, much more than we can comprehend. Indeed, even the workings of nature, whose laws are supposed to explain everything in that domain, are a great mystery which our minds have no power to fathom. It seems to us perfectly clear and reasonable that our bodies can be nourished and our lives supported when the grain is in our barns and the bread is in our pantry. But the mystery of preserving us remains the same as when we see no grain and no bread. It depends upon the will and power of our Lord, and that power remains the same whether the ordinary means be at hand or not. Five barley loaves and two small fishes will not ordinarily feed more than a few persons, but when the

Lord desires that they shall feed thousands, why should they not suffice? It was by His arrangement and order that the quantity which experience teaches to be necessary should be used, and when He pleases, any other quantity will suffice just as well. And when He pleases, the small quantity can be multiplied in a moment, as in the case before us, so as to be sufficient for a large number. It is all the Lord's doing, whether it be in accordance with what we call the laws of nature, which simply means in accordance with God's usual working, or whether it be independently of these laws and therefore of the ordinary working of God. The divine promises are certain, and if the ordinary means of fulfilling them are not sufficient for the purpose, they will be fulfilled by extraordinary means. God always has ways and means at His command, and those who trust His Word shall never be put to shame.

It is not difficult to be satisfied when we see the needful bread. Even the heathen have no difficulty under such circumstances. But we are to trust in the promise, not in the evidence furnished our senses. What God asks is faith, and contentment only because this necessarily exists where God's Word is trusted. God's promises are the ground of our confidence, and this ground remains firm, whether we see or do not see how they are accomplished. If we do not see how, God always does, and that is enough; and it is not our concern how the promises are to be kept, but God's, who always does what He declares. Therefore the believer—he who clings to the Word of God as eternal truth—confides in Jesus, who has promised us our daily bread, also in temporal things.

II. The Effect of such confidence will be to guard us against covetousness, and to render us content with our lot as appointed of God.

1. It will guard us against the dreadful sin of covetousness. This must not be confounded with industry in

the pursuit of our calling, which is commendable, and is commended in Holy Scripture. Indeed, it is rather the reverse of this. "Even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any did not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work and eat their own bread." 2 Thess. 3, 10–12. Idleness is itself a vice, running counter to the divine order. "Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work." But it also leads to other vices; "for Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do." Not minding their own business, they are very apt to meddle in that of others. And in addition to this they eat other people's bread, instead of their own, as they earn none themselves. So it by no means follows that a person is covetous because he is diligent in his business. On the contrary, the way to be liberal is to practice industry, in order that, by God's blessing, means may be acquired, through fidelity in our earthly calling, to contribute liberally.

Neither is it covetousness to practice economy. It is not only not wrong, but perfectly right and praiseworthy to be saving. "He said unto his disciples: Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost." To waste is sinful, as it neglects to use rightly those gifts which God has given for use. The thought that we need not save when we have an abundance is mischievous. It indicates that the only reason for saving is to possess, not to do the will of God in thankfully preserving and applying what He has mercifully given. What God is pleased to give we ought to feel bound to take care of. We should always save what remains. Of course we must do what is commanded us before we can have anything left: we must provide for our house, and for the demands of charity, be-

fore we commence laying by; but under all circumstances gather up the fragments which remain, that nothing be lost. And as this is the will of God, He is pleased to bless those who do it. Besides, it is clear that one of the means by which we are enabled to do good is when we have an abundance to save for the time of need.

Covetousness consists neither in industry nor in economy, but it does consist in an inordinate love for worldly possessions, by which they are not held in subjection to the will of God, but are rather used merely for selfish ends. The covetous man uses everything for his own gratification, without any reference to the wants or the comfort of others, and thus of course acts in opposition to that charity which Christians should always exercise towards one another. "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" 1 John 3, 17. We may be sure that our hearts are covetous if, having abundance, we see a neighbor in want and yet refuse to give him the needed assistance. So we may be assured that it is not a mere desire to save when we are envious of others' possessions. For if our hearts are content to let God rule, we cannot complain that He imparts gifts to others as well as to us. Further, it is an unmistakable indication of covetousness when we murmur at the demands which charity makes upon us, and complain while we are giving. If it is not God's will that we should contribute, in any particular case, we can and should refuse, without a complaint. But if in our conscience we know the purpose to be good, and still complain, we are murmuring at our heavenly Father's will, who gave us all we have and requires us to give again according to our ability. It is covetousness, in short, when we use the gifts without any regard to the will of the Giver, sometimes even in direct opposition to the Giver's will.

And this is a grievous sin. It is not only base ingratitude to treat the Giver thus; but it is worse. Covetousness is classed with the very worst of vices and pronounced idolatry. "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry." Col. 3, 5. "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." Eph. 5, 5. It is idolatry, because the earthly thing is confided in instead of God, and that in which we put our confidence is our god. On this account it excludes from the kingdom of heaven. None can enter there who have put their trust in a creature.

This should be remembered by our money-loving age and people. Some would be horrified if it were insinuated that they live in sin like fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, who yet live constantly in that covetousness which belongs in the same category. It is sad to think that some professing Christians, because they love money too much, stand on precisely the same level with the heathens, being idolaters like them, because they cling with their whole heart to some lifeless thing, which, in the day of trouble, can help them nothing. Where Jesus is trusted in, as respects temporal things, covetousness must flee, because the soul has a higher and more satisfactory refuge and help.

2. Therefore this confidence will render us content with our lot. He who has it will faithfully discharge the duties of his vocation, because this is pleasing in God's sight. But he will always remember that, although God secures him his temporal blessings, ordinarily, through his labor, yet that God is not bound to this means, and could and would give him his daily bread even if he could not attend to his vocation. So, although he may not see how

his future will be provided for, he will give to him that needeth, because this is our heavenly Father's will; and he will not rob God by withholding a needed gift under the mistaken notion that he may suffer for it at last. What is left, he takes care of — in future it may be needed for necessaries and for charities. Thus he is content: he does what belongs to him, and has confidence that God will do what is His part; namely, provide for us. If much is given then, he will be thankful to God who gives so much more than was asked; he will be glad that means are afforded him for accomplishing much good; but he will be vigilant and careful also, because to whom much is given of him much will be required. If, on the other hand, little is given, he will be thankful again that mercies were bestowed when only punishment was deserved; but he will not murmur that he has less than some others, because the distribution is in his Father's hands, who knows best what is good for each one of His children. He therefore knows it to be mercy, whether he has much or little, and this precisely because he trusts his God in temporal things also. The God in whom he trusts desires that all care should be taken from our own souls and cast upon Him who careth for us, and who always provides well.

Let us, then, examine ourselves whether we be in the faith, and do it with the assurance that those who will not trust in God in regard to temporal things, have not the faith which will cling to Jesus in spiritual things. They are deceiving themselves with the mere name of believers. "Trust in the Lord at all times, and verily thou shalt be fed;" trust in Him for the supply of all your needs, and you will be able to rejoice in the Lord always. Amen!

Fifth Sunday in Lent—Judica.

JOHN 8, 46–59.

Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God. Then answered the Jews, and said unto Him, Say we not well that Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil? Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honor my Father, and ye do dishonor me. And I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death. Then said the Jews unto Him, Now we know that Thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and Thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. Art Thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead; and the prophets are dead: whom makest Thou Thyself? Jesus answered, If I honor myself, my honor is nothing: it is my Father that honoreth me; of whom ye say, that He is your God: yet ye have not known Him; but I know Him: and if I should say, I know Him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know Him, and keep His saying. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto Him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. Then took they up stones to cast at Him: but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

Dear Brethren:

Blessed are they who hear the Word of God and keep it! The salvation which our Lord acquired for us is dispensed by the Word. Where this is there is life; where this is not there can be no life, because Christ is not there. But many are enemies of their own salvation, being enemies of the saving Word. Such persons are represented in Scripture as children of the devil, as our Savior says, just a few verses before our Gospel lesson:

"Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do: he was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth ye believe me not." They imitate Satan rather than God; are influenced by Satan in their bitter hostility to that which alone can deliver them from the bondage of sin; and are thus, as possessing the devil's spirit and likeness, called his children. Our text portrays some of these, and also shows us how our Savior treats them. We shall accordingly speak of

OUR SAVIOR'S TREATMENT OF SATAN'S CHILDREN.

I. The Children of Satan are so well described in our Gospel that we can have no difficulty in recognizing them. Their chief characteristics are exemplified in these Jews, to whom the Savior applies the designation.

1. They do not believe the divine Word. "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" says our Lord; "and if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." They are wholly unable to convince Him of any sin. In their hearts they must confess that never man spake or lived like this man—that there can no fault be found in Him. And yet they would not confess Him to be the Holy One. They were not able to refute one assertion of our Lord; they could not gainsay one word that He spake; and yet they would not believe and be saved. They would not believe because they were not of God, and therefore could not bear God's truth. They would prefer any falsehood to the humiliating truth which Jesus taught. They would not believe Him

because He told them the truth; and the utter wickedness of their hearts was thus manifest. They had all reason to believe, and yet would not. They stubbornly resisted the Holy Ghost.

And so there are many now who do not believe because they will not. It is not that there is any deficiency in the evidence, or any want of motives to those who hear the truth. The difficulty is in the heart and will. The truth cannot be refuted. Some do not even make the attempt to refute it, and still reject it. "If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?" The answer must always be: "Because ye are not of God!" And when the truth has been presented again and again, and is still not believed, we must apply the other words of our Savior also: "Ye are of your father, the devil." The truth is distasteful to the natural man, and the denial of the natural man's tastes and thoughts and wishes is impossible without grace. And that grace is wilfully rejected. The truth would not be objected to if it required no such self-crucifixion, no such humbling of one's self, in order to be exalted through grace; it is rejected because it mortifies the old man. And although there are myriads who do not own this to be the reason of their unbelief—do not even own it to themselves—it is none the less a fact that they would, upon the same evidence, believe anything that does not run counter to nature's inclinations. "If I tell you the truth, why do ye not believe me?" Because ye are not of God; because Satan opposes and forbids.

2. They rail at the truth and those who proclaim it. "Then answered the Jews and said unto Him, Say we not well that Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?" Here is a double taunt: an attempt, if possible, to arouse and foster prejudices against the Lord and His truth. To accuse Him of being a Samaritan was, among the Jews, no light charge; for there was a strong antipathy against

these people. We read that the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. John 4, 19. To be a Samaritan was therefore to be hated by the Jews, and to charge our Lord with being such was to excite Jewish hatred against Him. But the other accusation was still worse. They said that He had a devil. They charged upon Him that He performed His miracles by Satanic power. Some of them said, "He casteth out devils through Beelzebub, the chief of the devils." Luke 11, 15. But this was not all: it seems to be intended here as equivalent to charging that His doctrine is devilish—that He is a deceiver. This comes of their stubborn unbelief, in which they not only reject the truth, but maliciously and often ridiculously rail against it. Of course when it is asked why they do this, the only proper answer can be: Because they are of their father, the devil, and their father's lusts they will do. He cannot bear the truth in Jesus, neither can they.

And so there are many still who add to their unreasonable unbelief malicious railing. Every means is employed to depreciate the truth. Christians are represented as stupid or superstitious, as deceivers or bigots; and the truth is represented as being a mere human invention. On this account it is regarded as but an imposition upon man's credulity when grace and truth are said to be brought by Jesus Christ. It is unhappily true that as some men teach Christianity there is but little difference between this and naturalism. The cause of this, however, is not that Christianity is merely a system of moral laws, but that Christianity is misrepresented and degraded to mere legalism, instead of being accepted and presented as bringing grace in Jesus. It is sad that well-meaning errorists give so much occasion to ill-meaning children of Satan. But these will rail at any rate, Satan always finding some objection to the Gospel. When men cannot

bear the truth, they will resort to every means in their power to trample it down; and when they maliciously rail at the preachers and the preaching of truth, we can readily assign the cause. It is always the same as when the Jews railed at our Lord as being a Samaritan and having a devil. The reason of the wicked imputation is that which the Lord Himself gives: "Ye are of your father the devil, and his lusts ye will do."

3. They take up stones to cast at Jesus. Their conscience assures them that the truth is against them, and that their quarrel is in opposition to right and light. But the children of Satan will do the lusts of their father, who is a murderer from the beginning. He prompts his children to resist the truth, to rail against it, and at last, when nothing will give their cause even a semblance of reasonableness, to stone the Lord, who proclaims the unwelcome truth. It is characteristic of Satan's children to use violence against the right; and by this they of course show that they are not of God, but of their father, the devil.

It is the same wicked disposition that is in those persons now, who think that bodily violence will avail against truth—who deal out blows in reply to unanswerable arguments. And the fact that this belongs to the evil one's mode of fighting, should render all Christians suspicious about the cause which must resort to railing accusations and blows. Persecution should never be found where the truth is confessed. This will conquer, and those who have the truth know it, and are not concerned to use any other power. But error suspects its weakness and would accomplish by violence what it cannot effect by argument. The children of God trust in the power of God's Word. That is quick and powerful, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. But the children of the devil have no such mighty spiritual weapon, and therefore cast stones.

II. OUR SAVIOR'S TREATMENT OF THESE PEOPLE is instructive, and we should learn of Him. They are wicked, but He came to save that which was lost. Therefore He does not at once cast them off and leave them to their doom. Who should help the poor, benighted souls, if He refused to give them any attention? He is merciful, and therefore He patiently instructs them, He earnestly warns them, but when they stubbornly resist all His offers of light and life, He finally abandons them.

1. Our gracious Lord would not let the benighted children of the devil perish in their ignorance. He tells them the truth, and explains and expostulates even when they show not only disinclination to receive it, but hostility to it and to Him. They had deserved to be condemned and consigned to the dark abode of their father, the devil. But He came into the world not to condemn the world. As long as they were willing to hear at all, so long He was willing to teach them. The words which He spake, they were Spirit and they were life, and the only possibility of their salvation lay in speaking these words to them. By hearing them faith might come, and as long as they gave Him a hearing there was hope for them. These children of the devil might become children of God by the Holy Spirit's power. They heard Jesus only outwardly, and in the deeper and fuller sense they did not hear; and what they heard outwardly they were not willing to recognize as God's Word. "He that is of God," our Lord tells them, "heareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." In their hearts they would not hear; but while they consented to hear with the ears, the Lord graciously granted them the privilege, that the heart might be opened yet to the words which sounded in their ears. He had patience with them and sought to enlighten them.

In the first place, He shows them how they too may

escape the curse which is upon them and may have everlasting life. "I honor my Father," He says, "and ye do dishonor me. And I seek not my own glory; there is one that seeketh and judgeth. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death." They wronged Him much by their railing accusations, and sought to deprive Him of the honor which was justly His due as the Eternal Son of God and Savior of the world. But that should not hinder him from seeking their eternal welfare. His honor meantime He could leave in the hands of His Father, who judgeth righteous judgment and who will defend it. Christ "suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps; who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth; who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him who judgeth righteously." 1 Pet. 2, 21–23. His great concern was to bring these erring people to the light of salvation: then they would honor Him as well as the Father. Therefore He tells them of the death that is raging around them and of the deliverance which His words bring. If they would keep His sayings they would be forever secured against its ravages. He brings them the Gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation; as St. Peter said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." They did not understand Him. They heard Him not, because they were not of God. And yet they heard Him with the outward hearing of the ear, and in their hearts misapplied it all. They thought only of bodily death and bodily life, and therefore represented the gracious truth as contrary to reason. "Abraham is dead," they argue, "and the prophets; and Thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. Art Thou greater than our Father Abraham, which is dead? And the prophets are dead: whom makest Thou Thyself?" Their reasoning is:

Abraham and the prophets had the Word of God, and they died; have you something better? They were men of God, and they saw death; are you something more? The Lord did not become impatient at their blind reasoning, but gave them further instruction.

In the second place, He shows them that He is the Eternal Son of God, who was sent of the Father to bring life and salvation to men, and who is therefore necessarily before Abraham. He was not seeking honors that did not belong to Him. His honor would be nothing if He were indulging in such ambition. But He is seeking the honor of the Father, who sent Him and whom they recognize as their God. "I know Him and keep His saying," He tells them. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it and was glad. Then said the Jews unto Him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." That explains why those who keep His sayings shall never see death. In this person whom the Jews reviled and charged with having a devil, the Maker of heaven and earth appeared for our salvation. In Him the promises given to the fathers were fulfilled. He was the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. The Son of the Virgin Mary was the Son of God, and therefore He was before Abraham. Hence He prays: "Now, O Father, glorify me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." John 17, 5. In Him Abraham believed, and did not die, though his body had been in the grave for centuries, for "he that believeth in me," saith the Lord, "though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." John 11, 25. 26. The Son of God was clothed in human flesh that He might redeem mankind from death and bring life and immortality to light by the Gospel. He would have the Jews know

these things that they might believe and live; and therefore He endured patiently their contradiction and revilement while He sought to enlighten them.

2. But He also severely rebukes them when they will not receive His Word. He impresses it upon their consciences that while in the face of all the evidence that is laid before them, and in opposition to all the power that is exerted upon them, they still refuse to believe, they are not of God, but are of their father the devil. He shows them that their resistance to the truth has its ground in the wickedness of their own hearts, which is leading them to everlasting ruin. "Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do you not believe me?" They had no excuse, and they should see that it was the iniquity of their hearts that led to the stubbornness of their resistance. He shows them that it is all falsehood when they pretend to be actuated in their opposition by zeal for God. "It is my Father that honoreth me," He says, "of whom ye say that He is your God. Yet ye have not known Him; but I know Him; and if I should say, I know Him not, I shall be a liar like unto you; but I know Him and keep His saying." He exposes their wickedness in language that could not be misunderstood, and earnestly rebukes their sin, that they may see it as the cause of their opposition to the Word of God and of their coming calamity. In this respect too our Savior's example is a guide to us in the treatment of men who are not of God, and therefore will not hear God's Word.

All the more should this example be heeded because men are sure to go wrong when they follow the motions of their own hearts. On the one hand there is danger of impatient condemnation before the sinner has had a sufficient opportunity to know the truth. The wickedness of our flesh ever prompts some to pronounce damnation with a vindictive spirit that seeks revenge upon opponents rather

than their conversion. Men who are in earnest in their faith will rebuke the sin that opposes the Gospel and hinders its work, as our Savior rebuked it and warned the sinner of its dreadful consequences. To them it never can be a matter of indifference whether the Word of God is received or rejected. But they can have no pleasure in the death of the sinner, and therefore find no spiteful delight in declaring him damned. Even the condemnation of ungodliness must be an act of love that still seeks the salvation of the souls that Jesus suffered and died to rescue. On the other hand there is danger of dealing lightly with the grave subject of sin and death, and treating the refusal to hear God's Word as a trifling fault about which we need not have much concern. Some even mistake the natural sentiment of pity for Christian charity, and decline to rebuke sin lest such rebuke should give the sinner pain. It is to be deplored that this carnal sentimentalism is permitted to exert so large an influence among Christians, and to form so serious an obstacle to the work of the Spirit in men who are not consciously hostile to the Word of God. In consequence of this evil influence many would rather let a sinner perish than give him pain, and perhaps incur his enmity, by condemning his sin and giving him warning of its consequences. Sin is a dreadful evil, and the death to which it leads is a horrible reality. Those who truly love souls cannot otherwise than warn against it and earnestly seek to rescue the sinner from the impending ruin, even though such loving action should disturb an existing false peace and should subject them to the charge of intolerance and uncharitableness. Our Savior gave us an example of how we ought to walk in this regard. Let us follow this example in patient teaching and earnest rebuke of those who receive not the words of life. Our Savior persisted in His labor of love even until the wicked opponents resorted to physical violence. But there it ended.

3. He finally abandons them to their doom. "Then took they up stones to cast at Him; but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by." The Lord does not force His Word or His salvation upon any person. As long as people are willing to listen, He is willing to teach. When they outwardly as well as inwardly resist His Word, He turns away and leaves them in their darkness and their death. As He here teaches us by his example, so He taught also by precept. "Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet." Matt. 10, 14. In accordance with this precept and example was also the practice of the apostles. We read, for instance, that on one occasion "when the Jews saw the multitude, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold and said, It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." Acts 13, 45. 46. Every effort that tender solicitude for the salvation of souls could suggest is to be made to win them for the truth; but when they stubbornly resist the Word of God and will not come to Jesus that they may have life, nothing more can be done for them. When they will no longer even outwardly hear, but rather shut up every avenue by which the power of God might enter into their hearts and convert them, as those children of the devil manifestly did when in their rage they took up stones to cast at Jesus, He leaves them to their terrible doom and passes by.

And so the children of God must still do in their promulgation of the truth in the Savior's name. That people are children of the devil and do the lusts of their father

must not deter us from earnest efforts to bring them into the kingdom of God. By nature they will not favor the truth, and we must not expect them to do it. While we were yet enemies Christ died for us, and not the righteous, but sinners, are called to repentance. If men will only give us a hearing we can have hope of their conversion. Any opposition to the Word, by which alone they can be enlightened and converted, must be rebuked, while line upon line is given them in patient instruction, that they may see the truth. But when they will not learn and will not heed our warnings, but rather turn to persecute the children of God, we can only turn in sadness away, as Jesus left the persecuting children of the devil to perish in their sin, because they wilfully resist every means to effect their deliverance.

Dear brethren, the Word of God has come to us, and we have assembled again to-day to hear it. Do we hear it only with the outward ear, or are we hearing it too with our hearts and heeding it in our faith and life? Do not overlook the test which our Lord presents, "He that is of God, heareth God's words." How dreadful it would be if it must be said of any of us, with our gracious privileges and ample opportunities to know the truth unto salvation, "Ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God!" And we have reasons to watch and pray in this regard. Do not your minds sometimes wander away from the precious things that are spoken in this place concerning Christ and the Church? Do you not sometimes treat with indifference the things that belong to your everlasting peace, and give more earnest thought to the things of this present life? Does not the Word of God sometimes seem to you no more after all than so many words of man, and has it not sometimes no more effect in your hearts and in your lives than if they were mere human words that had no power to sanctify and save? Give earnest heed to

these things, and repent, and amend your ways. Death is approaching, and then comes everlasting death to those who will not hear the Word and be saved by its power. Hear the words of the Lord now, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying he shall never see death." Keep the truth concerning Jesus in your heart, and let it cheer you and strengthen you in your pilgrimage and render you active in bringing it to others, that you and they may have eternal life. Amen.

Palm Sunday.

MATT. 21, 1–9.

And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me. And if any man say aught unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them. All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass. And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, and brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set Him thereon. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strewed them in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.

Dear Brethren in Christ:

The season of Lent is drawing to a close. But the darkness is deepening. We stand at the entrance of passion week, whose history is full of gloom and grief. The troubles thicken around the innocent Lamb of God, and His soul becomes sorrowful even unto death. It is the most eventful week in the world's history, with its monstrosities of wrong and cruelty and its miracles of patient suffering and merciful endurance. But we must not turn away from it. Rather let us turn with intense interest to its scenes of sorrow and death. Close the blinds against the garish day of earth; shut out the noise of the world's business and merriment; tread lightly and solemnly as you approach where the Savior is dying. O, look away from

the world's vanities now, and behold your suffering Lord! But look that you may live. All the varied events of the sorrowful season call upon us to cast ourselves at the foot of the cross and give glory to Him who for our sins was nailed upon it. We shall thus bring our palm branches, on this Palm Sunday, and strew them in the way of our once crucified but now glorified Lord. Let us endeavor to-day to answer the question

HOW SHALL WE HONOR CHRIST?

Three things are necessary to this end. 1. *Believe in Him;* 2. *Confess Him;* 3. *Serve Him.*

I. We shall honor our Savior, as it is meet that we should, if we believe in Him, both in regard to His person and His work.

1. It is impossible to give our Lord the honor due unto His name without recognizing His mysterious person as shown us in Holy Scripture. He is neither mere God nor mere man, though He is true God and true man. He is both in one undivided person, and those who would truly honor Him must believe in Him as the God-Man, who is true God, and who yet goes up to Jerusalem to suffer and die.

That He is no ordinary person is plainly manifested in our text. When they were come nigh to the city He sent two of His disciples to bring an ass and a colt from the village hard by, telling them, "If any man say aught unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them, and straightway he will send them." And so it was, showing that the Lord knew His authority and power, and foreknew the result. "All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an

ass." He who came to them was truly the King concerning whom the prophet had spoken, and who was King of all kings and Lord of all lords. But He was the Majesty of heaven in human flesh, and that wonderful Being, who was God and man in one person, now in deep humiliation. There was nothing in the outward form that could challenge such honor as was given Him; for "the multitude that went before and that followed cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest." The very stones would have cried out, if the people had not honored Him. All indicated that we have here more than the eye could discern. And the Word of God teaches us who He was; namely, that He was the Word, the only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, but the Word made flesh. The everlasting Son of the Father assumed our human nature in order to redeem us, and in this wonderful person there are therefore two natures, the divine and the human. He is true God, the Maker and Governor of all things, but also true man, our brother, in all things like unto us, except that He had no sin.

This great and glorious person we must acknowledge, if we would honor Him. "Who is a liar but He that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father; but he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also." 1 John 2, 22. 23. Disbelief concerning the Word made flesh is discrediting God's own testimony and rejecting God's own merciful plan of saving us by His vicarious death. "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He hath testified of His Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in Himself; he that believeth not the Son hath made Him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God

gave of His Son." 1 John 5, 9. 10. God and man were united in one person, in order to execute the marvelous plan of divine wisdom and love for the redemption of our sinful and condemned race, and those who will not believe these good tidings exclude themselves from the benefits of the plan, as well as dishonor Him who came into the world to execute it.

2. The Son of God assumed the human nature that He might fulfill all righteousness in our stead. He was made of a woman, made under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. Gal. 4, 4. 5. What God required of us, His intelligent creatures, whom He made in His own image, must be fulfilled. There can be no revocation of the law, because it is simply the demand of the everlasting righteousness of God. He who does not fulfill its requirements must be subject to it in bearing its penalty. Either we must do it or die for not doing it. Now because it was possible for us neither to do what is demanded, since sin had rendered us unable, nor to suffer the penalty without dying the everlasting death, the Son of God became a man in order to take our place, do in our stead what the law requires, and suffer as our substitute for our transgressions. "Therefore as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." Rom. 5, 18. The life and death of our Lord in the flesh was vicarious; that is, He lived and suffered for us, doing all that God's justice required of us, and suffering all that God's justice required of us, and doing this in our stead, so that all might be set down to our account or be imputed to us. But that requires faith on our part. So it was ordained from eternity, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. We could not reap the benefits of all His loving work and bitter suffering without

believing in Him. But if we reject the gracious offer of life and salvation which is now made by the Gospel to us and to all sinners; if we despise the blood, the precious blood of the Son of God, which was shed for the remission of our sins; if we practically declare the whole wonderful life of privation and sacrifice and suffering to secure our deliverance from death a mere figment and sham,—how could we honor the Lamb of God who suffered all for us? Brethren, let us honor our Lord by believing Him to be what He is, and believing that He has done what is needful to deliver us from death and to secure our salvation. Unbelief rejects Him and despises Him and makes God, who bears witness of Him, a liar. Faith accepts the witness of the Word, adores the mystery of His person, glorifies the mercy manifested in His work, and rejoices in the salvation which He has wrought. Believe in Him, and thus give Him honor.

II. But if we believe in Him we will also confess Him before the world and thus give Him the honor that is due. We could not accept Him in our hearts without joining those in out text who "cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest."

1. We must not be ashamed of that Lord that bought us, though many sneer at His lowly life and are offended at His teaching. He Himself warns us: "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." Mark 8, 38. That indicates that there are temptations put in our way, to be ashamed of Christ and of His doctrine. He is the gracious Lord that hath loved us unto death—who could be ashamed of Him! And yet just that very death to which His love prompted Him induces some to be ashamed of Him.

Is that your God, proud reason asks in scorn, is that your God who hangs on the tree, all pale and spent and dying! Is that the mighty Savior of the world, who groans in helpless agony and cannot save Himself! Is that your Deliverer from every ill and every grief who suffers every ill Himself, and can by no means effect His own deliverance from pain and persecution and death! There was no way to rescue us from the curse except that of becoming a curse for us, and now thousands are ashamed of Him because He was stricken, smitten, and afflicted, and died an ignominious death. And the doctrine which He teaches, that men must renounce themselves and the world, and trust for salvation wholly in Him, the despised man of sorrows who was crucified,—that seems to countless multitudes preposterous. Even when they see no refuge else, the taunts of the scornful, that they are relying for help upon one that was murdered and that does not even promise them pleasures on earth as a reward for their trust, brings a blush to their countenance. They are ashamed of Jesus and of His words. That shame must be overcome, if we would honor Him; and we must be of good courage to face the hisses and the frowns and the blows of wicked men, and own our Savior at every cost. Denying Him brings dishonor upon His name. To honor Him we must own Him to be our Lord and Savior, and confess Him before men.

2. For such confession, notwithstanding the temptations to be ashamed of Him and of His words, there are abundant motives and incitements. It lies in the nature of faith to seek utterance. Like all true life it seeks the light. The Christian needs no legal constraints to impel him to it. He confesses his Savior because his heart prompts him to it and his Savior does not forbid it. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Matt. 12, 34. That which is in it will find vent in words; and

when it is full, it will overflow, even though there be counteracting influences. "We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken, we also believe and therefore speak." 2 Cor. 4, 13. The Spirit of God gives the impulse to utterance when He works the faith whose contents are to be uttered. Therefore it is written: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed." Rom. 10, 9–11. Hence if even there were nothing to suggest the need of confessing Christ before men, there would always be the impulse in believers to do it, and confession would still be made in order to relieve the soul in which faith presses for utterance. But there are motives that assist this inclination to confess which is inherent in faith. There is a God to glorify and there are souls to save. When we have found peace in believing and rejoice in the hope of glory, we are not only to tell this to others, that they may have the same hope and blessedness, but we are to give the praise to Him who has bestowed the blessing, not claim the honor for ourselves. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy and for Thy truth's sake." Ps. 115, 1. To the mercy of God we owe all that we are and that we have, and it would pain a truly believing heart to usurp or even to accept the praise which belongs to our gracious Lord. And whilst this would impel us to confess Christ, that He might receive the glory of our salvation, the desire that others might share with us the great blessing bestowed through Him upon a sinful world must equally move us to tell to all around who is the Savior and

where a remedy may be found for all our woes. Christ died for all, and all should know that there is help and hope for them as well as for us. To this end we should honor Christ by confessing Him and His words before all men, that we may say with David: "I will give Thee thanks in the great congregation, I will praise Thee among much people." Ps. 35, 18. "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation; lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, Thou knowest. I have not hid Thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared Thy faithfulness and Thy salvation; I have not concealed Thy loving kindness and Thy truth from the great congregation." Ps. 40, 9. 10. Such confession of the Lord's mercy and might and majesty is necessary to give Him the glory for all our blessings here and prospects of blessedness hereafter. "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest."

III. Such faith and confession imply that the Lord will be honored also by service. If you would magnify the name of your Savior, own Him as your King as well as your Redeemer, and render Him obedience. That means that the will of our Lord is absolutely recognized as the rule of our life, and that our highest attainment is serving the living God and thus fulfilling the end of our creation and redemption and sanctification.

1. To honor the Lord as Lord we must own Him to be the absolute Monarch, whose will is supreme. It is true, our dear Savior did not come into the flesh to preach the law. There was no need of the incarnation for that. That we must be subject to the will of God, and that this will is revealed in the Scriptures, could have been told us and made plain to us without the great sacrifice upon the cross. We do not say that our submission to the divine will and fulfilment of the divine commandments is the condition of salvation. What we are considering now is how

we shall honor Him who has saved us by His life and death in our behalf. And for this, not for the effecting of our salvation, which is bestowed upon us by grace, is obedience necessary. But it is not even obedience that we are specially considering. It is rather the recognition of our Lord as absolute Monarch. That is necessary before there can be any obedience, just as the redemption is necessary before there can be any proper acknowledgment of the Lord or any submission to His holy will. There is no other to whom we owe allegiance; there is no other Lord over us, though there be lords many; there is none else to whose authority we must bow. His will is supreme. As long as that is not recognized in our minds and in our hearts and in our conduct, we do not give Him the honor that is due. We may without this speak of Him as great and mighty and good, but He is not recognized as the King of kings and Lord of lords, and does not receive the praise which belongs to Him of right. The disciples whom the Lord sent to the village over against them, did as they were bidden, without any doubt and without any questioning. As long as there is any lurking suspicion that His authority might not prove sufficient or that His will might not prove right or practicable, the honor is not given Him which is His due. Recognize Him as Lord of all, whose will is supreme in heaven and earth: that is the way to honor Him.

2. But His will is to be done on earth as it is done in heaven, and we are to give glory to His name by doing it. It would profit little to profess submission to the Lord's will, but in practice let our own will be supreme. He has created us to the end that we might give Him glory by doing His good pleasure. He has redeemed us, that henceforth we might not live unto ourselves, but unto Him that died for us and rose again. He has sanctified us, that He might purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous

of good works. We cannot attain the design of God without subordinating our will to His and living unto Him. Life is a failure without that. The will of God is eventually done, whatever may be our choice and our conduct, but we have no share in the blessing which that will secures for His people, and designed and designs to secure for all men, unless the Lord's will is done in us and through us. To be blessed we must let the will of God be done, from whom all blessings flow. But in securing the blessings of obedience we honor the Lord our Savior. We honor Him when by our acts of obedience to His will we confess Him to be the Lord. We honor Him when by our acts of obedience we bring the blessings to others by which they will be enabled also to believe and confess and obey. We honor Him when by our obedience we perform acts of love which will induce our fellow men to praise the Lord, in whose name the deeds of kindness and benevolence are done. All Christian work redounds to the praise of Him who gives the command and the ability to perform it. "All things are for your sakes," says the apostle, "that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God." 2 Cor. 4, 15. We honor Christ when we do His will.

"Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of His holiness." Ps. 48, 1. The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive glory and honor and power. Most of all should man be moved to give Him praise and show Him honor. He has redeemed us; He has rescued us from the jaws of everlasting death. Therefore while we have breath should we praise Him who has done such great things for us. He comes to you with blessing: receive Him, glorify Him. Believe in Him as your Savior and your God; confess Him as the Holy Spirit prompts within; obey Him in all your life and labor. Thus you will honor Christ, who is your joy and everlasting salvation. Amen.

Good Friday.

1 Cor. 15, 3.

I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.

Beloved in our crucified Redeemer:

That is an awful scene which is presented on Mt. Calvary. The evangelists have described it with a simplicity and faithfulness that appeals to every heart. Before our eyes Jesus Christ hath been set forth evidently, crucified among us. They nailed our Lord to the accursed tree. He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth; when He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously. "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth." Is. 53, 7. "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know,—Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have slain." Acts 2, 22. 23. And this patient, suffering Lamb that was led to the slaughter was the Word made flesh that dwelt among us, the Lord of glory. No wonder that all creation was shocked when the dreadful tragedy was enacted. No wonder that from the sixth hour there was darkness over the land unto the ninth hour, and that when the Majesty of heaven bowed His head in agony and died, the veil of

the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent, and the graves were opened.

"Well might the sun in darkness hide
And shut his glories in,
When Christ the mighty Maker died
For man the creature's sin."

And what does the sorrowful mystery mean? Let us see as we sadly but adoringly meditate upon

THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

Let us take to heart *I. What it teaches of God, and II. What it solicits of man.*

I. The death of Christ teaches us a solemn lesson concerning the truth, the justice, and the mercy of God. It is a lesson that we should all learn for our own everlasting good.

1. The death of Jesus impresses on our minds, in the first place, the great truth that the Scriptures cannot be broken. "The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; as I have purposed, so shall it stand." Isa. 14, 24. While this is a warning to those who despise the threatenings of their Maker, it is full of consolation to those who rely on His Word and look to Him for help. "God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us." Heb. 6, 17. 18. The plan of God to save our sinful race by the mission of His Son to assume the wages of sin in our stead was formed in His eternal counsels, and centuries

before its realization in time it was announced for man's rescue and comfort. Hence the Savior is called "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," Rev. 13, 8, and hence the apostle writes: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." Eph. 1, 3. 4. What He hath purposed and promised is sure. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but His Word shall not pass away. "The truth of the Lord endureth forever." Ps. 117, 2.

The events which formed the closing scene of our Lord's life on earth, as well as the other principal events in his sad history, were predicted by the prophets and came to pass with an exactness that confirms the Christian's confidence in the truth of God's promises. On our Lord's last journey to the holy city, which so deplorably neglected the things that belonged to its peace, "He took unto Him the twelve and said unto them, Behold we go up unto Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on; and they shall scourge Him and put Him to death." Luke 18, 31–33. All these things were plainly written. But the disciples understood none of these things. It did not seem possible. Peter even said, "Be it far from Thee, Lord; this shall not be unto Thee." Matt. 17, 23. And as Jesus had to reprove Peter for the carnal thoughts that formed a barrier to the confident reception of the divine promises, so even after the agony was past and He had risen again from the dead, He found it necessary to say to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus: "O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have

spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." Luke 24, 25–27. Behold in the death of our Lord the evidence of God's fidelity and truth, whose every word, though to our poor understanding it may involve impossibilities, is literally fulfilled. Our God is true, "trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass." Ps. 37, 5.

2. We see in the death of our Lord, in the second place, the stern justice of God in the condemnation of sin. It was the wondrous plan for the redemption of mankind from sin and death that was formed in the counsels of eternity and executed in the fulness of time. The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world was He of whom John the Baptist testified, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." John 1, 29. But He could take it away only by taking it on Himself and suffering its consequences. And that placed Him in the sinner's stead, against whom the wrath of God was revealed. He "was made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." Gal. 4, 4. 5. The Son of God, who is Himself God over all, blessed forever, was willing to take the sinner's place. But that implied that He must die. "The wages of sin is death." Rom. 6, 23. And to be able to suffer and to die He assumed our nature into the unity of His person. Without this He could not die. He came into the world to this very end, that He might bear the wages of our sin. He is the one man in the world's history that was born in order that He might suffer death. He came to take away our sin; but "without shedding of blood is no remission." Heb. 9, 22. He takes the sinner's place; what is due to sin He assumes: He must die. God "hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin." 2 Cor. 5, 21. "Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried

our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we were healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Isa. 53, 4–6. If He would rescue us by becoming our Substitute, He must be content to bear the curse which was upon us. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Gal. 3, 13.

"Thou, ah Thou hast taken on Thee
Bitter strokes, a cruel rod,
Pain and scorn were heaped upon Thee,
O Thou sinless Son of God,

Only thus for me to win
Rescue from the bonds of sin:
Thousand, thousand thanks shall be,
Blessed Jesus, brought to Thee.

Thou didst bear the smiting only
That it might not fall on me,
Stoodest falsely charged and lonely,
That I might be safe and free."

But would not the Father of mercies and God of all consolation interfere to save His own dear Son, His only Begotten, from the bitter anguish and cruel death? Surely He would not let the innocent Son of His love suffer and die when His omnipotence could by one blow destroy His heartless and malicious foes. So reason would wildly talk, not knowing that all our hopes would be dashed if this were done. It could not be. His Son takes upon Himself our transgression, and He must die. The wages of sin is death. Even God's own dear Son cannot be spared when He comes in the way of divine justice. Its demands are

irrevocable, immutable. The soul that sinneth it shall die, and when the Lamb of God takes the sin of man upon Himself God's righteousness makes death inevitable. Therefore the Savior cried in His bitter agony; "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Look at the cross and see the stern justice of God that cannot bend and cannot change.

"Tell me, ye who hear Him groaning,
Was there ever grief like His?
Friends through fear His cause disowning,
Foes insulting His distress;
Many hands were raised to wound Him,
None would interpose to save;
But the deepest stroke that pierced Him
Was the stroke that justice gave."

There was no escape from the wages of sin even for the spotless Son of God when He became our Substitute. How foolish then for any mortal man to dream that he can escape that justice, if he dies in his sins!

3. But there is strong consolation in the death of Christ, because it is a marvelous manifestation of God's mercy. By the grace of God the Savior tasted death for every man. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." John 3, 16. 17. In view of our sin it would be reasonable to expect that the Son would come in wrath to take vengeance upon His adversaries. And that is the thought which men usually have when they hear of His coming. They are afraid of Him, because they feel guilty. Therefore the assurance is given us that He came not to condemn the world, deserving as it is of condemnation. He came to save. That was the intent of His death. It was visited upon Him in

justice, because He in mercy took our sins upon Himself; but it was visited upon Him that the guilty might go free. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." John 15, 13. "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." Rom. 5, 6–8. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us." 1 John 3, 16. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John 4, 9. 10.

Love could make no greater sacrifice than that which God made in delivering His own Son unto death for our salvation. Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world groaning upon the cross to make satisfaction for our transgressions, and see there the height and depth of infinite love. God spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all. Not even that which was dearest to Him did He withhold to secure our deliverance from everlasting death and woe. Yea, herein is love. Look, and wonder, and adore!

II. This mystery of the Savior's death calls us to repentance and faith and gratitude. It is meet that yet a few words should be said of this.

1. We could not look rightly and profitably upon the bleeding Lamb as He hangs upon the cross, without seeing in His bitter suffering and cruel death the penalty of our own sins. Behold there the consequence of your guilt! Sin brings death; your sin brought death to the Son of God, who in infinite mercy was willing to bear it, that you

might live. And can it be that you still think it a light thing that you are a transgressor of the righteous law, whose condemnation even the Savior could not escape when He was made sin for you?

> "Ye who think of sin but lightly,
> Nor suppose the evil great,
> Here may view its nature rightly,
> Here its guilt may estimate.
> Mark the Sacrifice appointed,
> See who bears the awful load;
> 'T is the Word, the Lord's Anointed,
> Son of man and Son of God!"

The cross shows the enormity of sin, and sets before our eyes the terrors of the law with its indignation and wrath. And yet so many heed not the lesson and reject the admonition to repentance. So many, O so many, go on in their sin, as if its stupendous guilt had not brought the Son of God to the ignominious death which to-day we contemplate. O let not that sin prove your destruction, notwithstanding all our Savior's woe! God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent. See your sin and the condemnation which is on it, and turn from it as the enemy that brings death.

2. But important as it is that we should see our sin when we look upon our Savior's death, it is only that we may look further and see the atonement which is made and the satisfaction which is rendered, that we may flee for refuge to the hope set before us, and believe and be saved. So it was ordained in the eternal counsel of God, that we should share the benefit of the vicarious death by believing on Him who suffered it. He paid the whole penalty of the law's transgression, He endured all the wages of our sin. But He will compel no man to avail himself of the blessing secured. He merited the exemption of all from death, He merited eternal life for all; but He has decreed that

these merits should be ours only by faith, and therefore calls upon all to repent and believe the Gospel. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness, that He might be just, and the justifier of Him which believeth in Jesus." Rom. 3, 23–26. There is no way of availing ourselves of the great benefits of Christ's death but that of believing in Him. "He that believeth shall be saved." The Son of God became man to suffer and die for you. Do you believe that He suffered and died for you, that you might escape the wages of sin and have eternal life? Blessed are they that believe. The call comes to you from the cross to-day: Believe and be saved. Will you hear and heed the call, or will you go forth from this house as if the awful scene on Calvary concerned not you?

Dear Savior, draw reluctant hearts;
To Thee let sinners fly,
And take the bliss Thy love imparts,
And drink, and never die.

3. And to one thing more the death of Christ admonishes us. It challenges our gratitude. It calls upon us to consecrate our lives to Him. To this end He died for us, that being freed from the power of sin we should live unto righteousness. To this end He gives us the regenerating grace that we might own Him as our Lord as well as our Savior, and live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in holiness all our days on earth and forever in heaven. "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all

dead; and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again." 2 Cor. 5, 15. 16. When we have once seen the dreadful consequences of our sin, and realized the glorious fact that our blessed Lord has borne our penalty and secured for us eternal life; when we once, being justified by faith, have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ—how could we otherwise than praise His dear name in our words and in our works? "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Gal. 6, 14. Our citizenship is now in heaven; there are our treasures. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Col. 3, 1–3. If ye are really Christ's, in gratitude take up the cross and follow Him, living thankful lives to the glory of Him who died for you that you might live with Him forever.

O brethren, on this sacred day, devoted to the commemoration of our dear Savior's bitter death for our sin and for our salvation, let the blessed truth shine in on your souls and move you to a new hatred of sin and a more earnest devotion to Him who died for you, that you might be His in time and in eternity. Amen.

Easter.

MARK 16, 1–8.

And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him. And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: He is risen; He is not here: behold the place where they laid Him. But go your way, tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you. And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre: for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid.

Beloved in our risen Lord:

Raise your triumphant songs to-day. The Savior who was delivered for our offences is raised again for our justification. The scenes which we contemplated last Friday were unutterably sad; the scenes which we contemplate to-day are unutterably glad. In the history of our Lord but a few days ago all was gloom, now all is glory; then the enemy seemed to have conquered, now it is manifest that he has suffered defeat. The loving women, who had not for a moment forgotten their dear Lord, though they did not understand the distressing events which had occurred and which left them disconsolate, hastened to the Savior's tomb, as soon as the Sabbath was past, that they might anoint the dead body. The chief priests and Pharisees had provided against the practice of any decep-

tion by the disciples of Jesus, and, according to the orders of Pilate, had "made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone and setting a watch." That stone troubled them; for it was great, and who should roll it away? But it was a needless trouble; for "behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone from the door." Therefore when they looked they saw that the stone was rolled away, and there was nothing to hinder their entrance. They entered, but they saw a sight that frightened them. Instead of the dead body which they sought, their eyes fell upon an angel robed in white, who immediately preached to them the gospel of the resurrection, as an angel preached to the affrighted shepherds the gospel of the nativity. "He saith unto them, Be not affrighted: ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: He is risen; He is not here: behold the place where they laid Him. But go your way, tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you." That they trembled and were amazed, and in their fright fled from the sepulchre, was that not perfectly natural? Everything was so new and strange and unexpected that their minds were all confused, and it was necessary for them to collect their thoughts before they could realize the truth and obey the angel's directions. It was wonderful, and with all the light which was shed upon the occurrence by our Lord and His apostles, it is difficult still for us to realize the glorious truth. But it is truth. Our Lord is risen. And the tidings are joyful as they are true, and therefore the Church sings triumphant songs of victory and joyfulness to-day. Let us endeavor to realize the blessed fact of

CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

We propose to point out *I. What it shows*, and *II. How it cheers*. May the blessed Lord, who is present where two or three are gathered together in His name, open our eyes to behold the King in His beauty!

I. The resurrection of Christ shows that the great sacrifice offered upon the cross satisfied the demands made upon the human race, and that a victory, full and complete, was gained over all the enemies of our souls.

1. When our Savior, in His last bitter agony, cried, "It is finished," they were not idle words which He spake. It was no time for playing with unmeaning and unprofitable phrases. The Lamb of God was dying. He had come not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. The sin of the world had been laid upon Him, that He should bear it away and thus remove the curse that was upon us and the barrier which it had built between us and God. All righteousness must be fulfilled. The fiat had gone forth, as the infinite justice of God required, that the soul that sinneth, it shall die. That sentence could not be revoked. It was not in the power of God to violate righteousness, neither could He lie. "Verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled." Matt. 5. 18. He took the sinner's place, and must render all that the holy law imposed on sinners. That work was done; it was all finished. Was the work that was done the accomplishment of all that was required only in the mind of Jesus, or was it satisfactory also to the Father, who gave His only begotten Son to accomplish it?

The resurrection is the divine answer. Had Jesus remained in the power of death, the victory would not be won. That would mean that He mercifully undertook the

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mighty work, but succumbed to the power of the foe, and finally failed. It would mean that He went into the realm of death and was held a captive there, as men are held captive there who have rendered no satisfaction to the righteousness of Jehovah and therefore receive the wages of sin. It would mean that the burden of human iniquity and human woe was laid upon Him and crushed Him. But, blessed be God, it was not thus. "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know, Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain; whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it." Acts 2, 22–24. No, it was not possible that death should hold Him, since He had fulfilled all righteousness, and death had no more claim upon Him and no power over Him. "The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified His Son Jesus, whom ye delivered up, and denied Him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead, whereof we are witnesses." Acts 3, 13–15. The resurrection is the testimony of God the Father that the Savior's work is finished and accepted, and that the satisfaction rendered is perfect. He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead," (Rom. 1, 4.) and that was fulfilled which is written: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption." Acts 2, 27. All our hopes depend upon the Savior's resurrection, which gives us the assurance that

the atoning work is done. "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." 1 Cor. 15, 14. But He is risen, and our preaching and our faith are not vain. The atoning sacrifice is rendered and accepted.

2. And every foe is conquered. "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner; but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel according to the power of God, who hath saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." 2 Tim. 1, 8–10. The great enemy of our souls made unremitting assaults upon the Holy Child Jesus and sought His destruction. From the murder of the innocents in Bethlehem to the murder of the Innocent on Calvary, the life of our Savior was one of conflict with Satan and sin and death, and the bitter persecution of the Holy One ended only with the seeming victory of the foe, when our Savior bowed His bleeding head on the cross and died the ignominious death. What the malignant foe of man purposed is shown in Christ's temptation. Adam was assaulted thus in Paradise, and was overcome. He fell, and with him fell our race and all our hopes. The second Adam came to retrieve what was lost, and the devil made the same assault on Him. But it was not with the same success. He was utterly foiled. And so it was in every attempt that was made to compass our final and irretrievable destruction by leading the Savior into sin, or disabling Him in the contest with sin and its causes and consequences. When the crucifixion was accomplished the foe gained a seeming victory, but it was his utter and perfect

defeat. The Savior died, and that death was real; but it was voluntary, and not the result of superior power in the foe. It was the means necessary to effect the redemption of fallen man, and it was endured by the vicarious Sufferer's own free choice. "Therefore doth my Father love me," He tells us, "because I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." John 10, 17. 18. Satan had nothing to glory over when his plans to bring about the cruel death of the Prince of life were successful. It was his own signal and complete discomfiture. Christ was the glorious Victor in the deadly strife. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part in the same, that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Heb. 2, 14. 15. In the freedom of His mercy He assumed our nature, that He might taste death for every man, and rise again triumphantly from the grave to give eternal life to His people "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." 1 John 2, 8. Death is swallowed up in victory. The devil has now no power over them that are Christ's, and death is but the gate to the complete enjoyment of life. The Lamb of God was slain, but He blotted out "the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." Col. 2, 14. 15. The resurrection is the glorious proclamation of God that Christ has triumphed over every foe.

O death! where is thy sting? say thou!
And, grave! where art thou hiding?—
What harm can Satan do us now?
With all his boastful priding.
Thanks be to God! of glorious might,
Who conquered for us in this fight
Through Jesus Christ our Captain.

How fiercely the arch-serpent raged,
When Christ his might contested?
Yet Christ, though all hell's hosts engaged,
Their prowess from them wrested.
And though the serpent pricked His heel,
Yet was he made its weight to feel,
That his head's bruised forever.

And now Christ comes to life again,
And breaks death's life asunder;
He binds the foe, takes hell amain,
Wrests from Him Satan's plunder.
No power can stay the Victor's march,
He enters the triumphal arch:
All must succumb before Him.

But the blessing of the resurrection must be appropriated by individual souls if they would enjoy it. Therefore it is necessary to consider

II. How it cheers. The Church of Christ sings joyful songs of triumph to-day. She exclaims with the apostle, "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. 15, 57. But this is because she believes the glorious tidings that the Lord is risen. By faith in the Redeemer His resurrection is ours and His righteousness is ours. Believe, and share the Church's Easter joy.

1. By faith His resurrection is ours. God designed that we should share the benefits of our Savior's victory, and therefore made all necessary provision for imparting them. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up

for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Rom. 8, 32. There is no link missing in the chain of our Lord's appointments for our souls' salvation. The blessing that is acquired for us is also imparted to us. It is bestowed by means which He has Himself instituted for the purpose, and it is appropriated by the faith which He works to this end.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." 1 Pet. 1, 3–5. In that life which was laid down in death and which paid the penalty of our sins, but which was taken up again that it might be a new life of blessedness to them that were dead in trespasses and sins, we are made to share by the grace of God. That regenerates, and that alone can regenerate our race. Therefore man's regeneration is so intimately associated in the Scriptures with the resurrection of our Lord. "Now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." 1 Cor. 15, 20–22. Hence the necessity of being born again, that we may live in Him over whom death has no more power, and hence the appointment of the Word and Sacraments to confer upon men the new life, that they may not abide in the death which is upon them by nature, and which debars them from the mansions to which our risen Lord has ascended. We "are born again, not of corruptible seed," says St. Peter, "but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the

glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away; but the Word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you." 1 Pet. 1, 23–25. And St. James says: "Every good and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning. Of His own will begat He us with the Word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures." James 1, 17. 18. The Word of God brings us into living relation to Christ and thus regenerates. That is also the design of Baptism, which is applied to adults until there are believers to bring their children to Christ, but which, after the Church is established, is mainly designed for infants, that they too, as they cannot be reached by the preaching of the Gospel, may be brought to Jesus and made partakers of His resurrection. Hence Baptism, although it is not the exclusive means of regeneration, is more generally designated as such in the Scriptures. Our Lord says: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." John 3, 5. St. Paul says: "According to His mercy He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Tit. 3, 5. And this regeneration is effected by bringing us into union with Christ, who is our life and from whom all spiritul life must come. Therefore the apostle says: "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Gal. 3, 27. That this brings us into fellowship with Christ's resurrection is obvious. His is the life that has passed through death and abideth forever, as the life of the Head upon which all the members must depend and by which they must be actuated. Thus St. Peter says, speaking of the flood: "The like figure whereunto Baptism doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but

the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." 1 Pet. 3, 21. And St. Paul says: "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by Baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection." Rom. 6, 3–5. Manifestly the Holy Supper also has the same general purpose in regard to the life of our Lord. It does not regenerate, indeed, but it keeps us in union with Him who died for us and rose again, that we, who through Baptism were made partakers of the new life in Christ, might be preserved in such blessed fellowship until the end. "Because I live ye shall live also," says our Savior. John 14, 19. And St. Paul declares: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Gal. 2, 20.

It must not be overlooked that this life, as the apostle declares, is by faith. The means of grace do not regenerate when the grace brought by the means is rejected. They bring the saving gift, but they do not force it upon the soul. As the life is not ours without impartation, so when conveyed to us by the divinely appointed means it is not ours without reception. That reception takes place by faith. Hence it is written: "The Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." Heb. 4, 2. And St. Paul writes: "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus; for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Gal. 26. 27. Regeneration is by the Word and by Baptism, but it does not exist without faith. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." 1

John 5, 1. But the means which God has appointed for the regeneration of sinners are effectual to accomplish their end. They always work faith and regeneration when they are not wilfully and obstinately resisted. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God," says St. Paul. Rom. 10, 17. And faith comes by Baptism, as regeneration, which does not take place without faith, comes by Baptism. Hence all baptized infants are born again, because in them there is no conscious and stubborn opposition to the Holy Spirit's work. They are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. Only in adults do the means sometimes fail of accomplishing their end, because some wilfully resist the grace which would work faith and effect regeneration, so that the end could be accomplished only by forcing upon them what they do not want. Such forcing would be an exercise of physical, not of spiritual power, and has no place in the spiritual kingdom. Hence our Lord says: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." Matt. 23, 37. Christ is risen from the dead and now comes as the Life to us in Word and Sacrament; let Him enter in and abide with you, and you shall have the cheer of His resurrection, joining in the jubilant song of triumph that rings through the Church on this gladsome day.

2. The resurrection of Christ brings cheer to our hearts because by faith His righteousness is our righteousness. When we are begotten again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, as St. Paul declares, we share by faith the merits which He acquired for us through all His obedience unto death. His whole work and passion was in our stead, and when He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father,

the fact was a declaration that all was finished and all was well. He was made under the law to redeem them that were under the law, and that redemption was by the resurrection declared to be complete. He secured a perfect righteousness, having done all and suffered all that justice required of man. And that perfect righteousness was acquired not for Himself, but for us. It only remains that by the faith of the operation of God we appropriate it. To that end it is set before us in the Word which is preached. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." 2 Cor. 5, 20. 21. "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, The just shall live by faith." Rom. 1, 16..17. We are not to be terrified by the threatenings of the law, which we have transgressed and which denounces death upon the transgressor. That law is not revoked, but it is fulfilled by our gracious Lord. He paid the penalty of our sin that we might escape; He died that we might live, but that we might live in Him, who was raised again from the dead and now liveth and reigneth forever. St. Paul says of Abraham, who saw the Lord's day and was glad, that his faith was imputed to Him for righteousness, then continues: "Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to Him, but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification." Rom. 4, 23–25. It is utterly impossible for us to secure a righteousness of our own before God. We have sinned, and have noth-

ing to expect but the indignation and wrath, the damnation and death which are due to our sin, unless we flee for refuge to the hope set before us in Christ. "Therefore by the deeds of the law," says the apostle, "there shall no flesh be justified in His sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness which is of God by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Rom. 3, 20-24. That righteousness is our hope and our joy. That is what cheers us. Christ's righteousness is ours, and in that we shall be able to stand on the judgment day. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Rom. 8. 33. 34.

The demands of justice are satisfied and the victory over death and hell is won. By faith in our Redeemer we share His resurrection and His righteousness. Therefore

> Raise your joys and triumphs high:
> Sing, ye heavens, and earth reply.
> Love's redeeming work is done,
> Fought the fight, the battle won.

But "if ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above." Col. 3, 1. Give Him glory with your consecrated lives as well as with your joyous voices. Thus glorify your risen Lord while you share His glorious victory. Amen.

First Sunday after Easter.

JOHN 20, 19–31.

Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when He had so said, he shewed unto them His hands and His side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained. But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days again His disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith He to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name.

Dear Brethren:

The resurrection of our Savior is, next to the announcement of His birth, the most joyful fact which history records. He tasted death for every man. But death could not retain Him in its icy grasp. At the time which He had Himself previously announced He came forth from

the grave as the mighty conqueror of death and hell. He showed Himself alive to His disciples, that their faith might be established in the Word which He had given them. But He desired also, in His own person, to bestow those blessings which He was pleased to acquire for men by His sufferings and death. So He remained on earth forty days after His resurrection, before he ascended into heaven, and during that time bestowed His blessings on His people for their comfort. His first appearance to His disciples is recorded in our text; and at this very first appearance He proclaims to them that which He had so dearly purchased for them; namely, peace—perpetual peace through faith in His name. Let us endeavor to realize the force of the fact that

JESUS GIVES HIS DISCIPLES PEACE.

He does this *I. In his own Person*, and *II. Through His Servants*, who officiate in His name.

I. JESUS BRINGS PEACE TO HIS DISCIPLES IN HIS OWN PERSON, while He still tarries here upon earth.

1. To this end He comes to His people. He does not require that they should go in quest of Him, and withhold His promised blessings until they succeed in finding Him. He always comes to men first, else men would never come to Him. Where should they seek Him? It is true that He had told them before of His resurrection, and had informed them of the time when this would take place. But this was such an unheard of thing, that they probably presumed the meaning to be something else than the words imported. That He should die and rise again seemed, at any rate, to be far from clear to them; and when they were assured of His death, they were still slow of faith and understanding in regard to His resurrection. Early in the morning on the day following the Sabbath, that is on Sun-

day morning, some devoted women did indeed resort to His sepulchre; but it was with sweet spices for our Lord's anointing, not to see Him living. How could they first go in quest of Him, when He seemed to them a dead man, not a living Savior? And how, if Jesus came not in quest of men, could these now ever find Him, or even know of His existence as a living Savior? His love is great: He first seeks, then saves that which was lost.

And He comes where natural reason would never expect Him. On the same day of His resurrection, in the evening, His disciples being assembled, He appeared in their midst. This was quite extraordinary, not only because they had supposed Him dead, but also because the doors of their room were shut, for fear of the Jews. His love prompts Him to assemble with His beloved followers, and no natural obstacles can impede the progress of His love. If our Lord's Body were such as some, neglecting the teachings of Scripture, suppose it to be, there would indeed be an insuperable difficulty here. Those who deny the possibility of the Lord's bodily presence, wherever He pleases, as, for instance, in the Holy Supper, would, if they applied their principles consistently, say that His Body could not have appeared among His disciples while the doors were shut—so securely shut, that they felt safe against the Jews. But things are not as such vain philosophy dreams. There may be properties in matter, and capabilities, of which our reason has remained in utter ignorance. But be this as it may, they surely do not speak reverently nor, when viewed in the light of revelation, even reasonably, who think our Lord's Body, which is permeated by the Divinity, and which is glorified besides, subject to the same laws, or, to say it perhaps more intelligibly, subject to the same limitations and trammels, to which our poor bodies are subject. Why, even this frail tenement which my soul inhabits to-day—who knows what its powers

and capacities may be when once it is glorified? Our Lord stood in the midst of His disciples as if the doors had been open; and only to the mind which rejects the higher light of revelation, can there be any great difficulty in this. And that our Lord came yet on Sunday evening, shows how ardent was His love, as His appearance among them, notwithstanding the closed doors, shows the greatness of His power as the Savior of the world, who is at once God and man.

2. He brings peace to their souls. He died to purchase our peace. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed." Is. 53, 5. Therefore the apostle says that we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Rom. 5, 1. Therefore, too, the angels sang, when the Savior came, of peace on earth and good-will to men. Whilst the curse of God rested upon man on account of His sin, he could only be full of fears and unrest—through fear of death all his lifetime subject to bondage. Therefore the Scriptures say that there is no peace to the wicked. But since our chastisement was laid upon Jesus, so that we might have peace, we have this secured to us through faith.

And this peace our Lord brought and bestowed when He said, "Peace be unto you!" His words are deeds, not mere sounds. To treat God's word and man's as perfectly alike, one having no more power than the other, is a gross wrong against the Lord of all. As man's word is according to man's strength, so God's word is according to God's strength. Man does what he can towards the accomplishment of his design; and when he gives expression to his will in words, he does all that he is able towards effecting what his words import. When we say to each other, Peace be to thee, we give the peace so far as the gift lies in our power, unless our words be mere pretense.

When the Lord speaks, it cannot be mere pretense: man may use language merely to hear the sound, or to mislead them that hear; but God never can. And as the Savior's words are always sincerely meant, so they are always quick and powerful, to accomplish that whereunto they are sent. If there were any limit to divine power, the Word of God might sometimes fail; but since omnipotence is His, in every case the Word brings what it says. Hence the words, "Let there be light," were not a powerless wish; they were the utterance of an almighty will, and therefore the record is just as one acquainted with the circumstances would expect it to be, "and there was light." Hence, "God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself upon the earth, and it was so." And so it is still. The word of the Lord, that every creature should bring forth after its kind, is in force until this hour, and therefore the mystery of birth and growth continues until this hour. So our Lord's words, "Peace be unto you," are not a powerless wish. The purchased peace was actually imparted by the words, although something was requisite to appropriate the blessing on the part of those who heard. The word actually conveyed the thing, but man must lay hold of it and cherish it.—Hence only those who believe have peace. Those who reject in unbelief the proffered gift, are devoid of it, not because the Lord designed it not for them, and not because the word did not actually bring it to them, but because the word, with its gracious blessings, was rejected. Unbelief has neither peace nor gladness, because the joy is despised when the gift is rejected. So the words, "Peace be unto you," were really an offering of peace to all, and remain so, notwithstanding that some, rejecting the gift, have no peace.

3. And as Jesus brings peace, so He supports the

weak. Among those to whom the Lord appeared the second time was Thomas, called Didymus, who was one of the twelve. When the other disciples, after the Lord had appeared to them the first time, told Thomas of His appearance, he would not credit their words. It probably seemed to him, that although his fellow disciples would not be guilty of a falsehood, yet they might be and probably were deceived. Therefore he said unto them, "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe." Here is littleness of faith! Here is the fulfillment of that which had been foretold, testified to by a number of the most reliable witnesses, and yet Thomas, weak Thomas, continues to doubt, and even asserts his intention of rejecting all testimony except that of his senses. But while Thomas doubts, we must not rank him with infidels. He is weak, but not wicked. He has little faith, but has faith still in reference to the Christ. He had not sundered himself from the Lord's followers. He lacked light, not willingness to walk in the light when he once perceived it. The disciples generally were to receive much yet, before they were deemed qualified for the arduous work which was to be performed by them. They were to receive the Spirit, who would lead them into all truth. But this truth, as it was so different from all human thoughts and imaginations, could be apprehended only gradually. So the case of Thomas is not precisely like the case of those who now require the evidence of their senses, of their own experience first, before they will embrace the truth. For now we have the full truth before us, as it was given to the disciples in fulfillment of the promise that the Spirit should lead into all truth. It is the case of those rather who err from ignorance, but who are always willing to hear and heed the truth when it is presented. And to such, as being humble,

the Lord giveth grace. Therefore eight days after His first appearance, again on the Lord's day, "His disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst and said, Peace be unto you. Then said He to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing." The willingness of Thomas is manifest from the effect of this. "Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and my God." He acknowledged his Master and confessed His name immediately. But the weakness of Thomas is manifest from the fact that "Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Thus the Lord brings peace also to the weak and doubting, who do not reject the needful light when He mercifully brings it to them.

But this peace He still imparts, although not directly in His own person as then.

II. Jesus brings peace to His disciples through His Ministers, who act in His name.

1. The peace which Jesus purchased, and which He bestowed on His disciples, was not acquired only for them, but for all times. It would overthrow all hope to suppose that Christ died only for the generation of men living at the time of His death. It would be equally destructive of all hope to suppose that the impartation of the purchased peace was confined to the generation then living. The Scriptures teach the reverse—they give hope to all alike. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And this peace is conveyed by the Word now as then. As the life and death of Christ avails for all times, the words of our Lord unto salvation must of course also be applicable to all times. And the

divine Word cannot lose anything by age: like its Author, it is yesterday, to-day, and forever the same. Therefore the proclamation of the Lord's Word is the effective proclamation of peace, whether He choose to speak that Word in His own glorious Person, or be pleased to have it spoken by others, whom He sends for that purpose. The Word is precisely the same in either case, and the effect must therefore be the same in all cases, as this depends only on the divine Word. Hence the apostle says that Jesus "came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them which were nigh." This preaching necessarily continues, else the Gospel must have ceased. But we are commanded to preach the Gospel now, and it is the same Gospel precisely as then. Hence it is called the "Gospel of peace," as bringing peace always. It brings the same glorious gifts, as it ever did; for it is still the Word of the living God, whose words are deeds. If the Gospel did not perish when Jesus ascended on high, it is quick and powerful now; but as the death of Christ, the blessed effects of which are distributed by the Gospel, was for all times, the Gospel itself must necessarily be so; and the words of Jesus, "Peace be unto you," concern us as much as they did those to whom they were immediately spoken.

2. Therefore He sends His Ministers to speak peace to the disciples. "Then said Jesus unto them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained." The context certainly seems to say this, that He gave them peace, and as He was sent, so He sent them to bring peace also; and because peace depends upon the forgiveness of sins, therefore whosesoever sins they remit, they

should be remitted. The mercies of God endure forever; the peace of God avails for all men; therefore the disciples should proclaim it as it was proclaimed to them, and it must of course be as effectual when they proclaim it, as when the Lord did it Himself. Here then is the commission to preach the Gospel, and the promise that it shall not lose any of its effect by being preached by man.

He sends His ambassadors to preach the Gospel, not some important thoughts or devices of man. He who gives instruction in regard to matters of philosophy or literature, of science or art, may be doing a very useful work, but it is not preaching the Gospel. It is useful to impart information upon the best modes of discharging the duties of our temporal vocation, but neither is this the Gospel. Our reason is given us to guide us in things pertaining to the present life; and in such matters, as there are many men, there will be many minds, no one way of doing a thing being essential, each one being permitted to use his own judgment and do as seems to him best, provided only he violates no divine command in exercising his choice. But the Gospel deals with divine revelation and our future happiness, and admits no variety of opinions, since all must submit to God's thoughts and will. Not how to prosper in business, but how to be saved, is the question with which the Gospel is concerned. This brings peace: peace with God in view of our sins and the judgment of that great day. Glad tidings of great joy, which are unto all people, are to be proclaimed. To this end the disciples were sent, having received the necessary endowments. And the message which they were to bring was, and is now, God's message to man—not man's to his fellow. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray

you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." 2 Cor. 5, 19. 20. The servant bears the Master's message, which of course has its effect proportioned not to the servant's, but to the Master's ability. Therefore peace is still imparted by the Savior, through the instrumentality of His servants; and as this peace is possible only where men's trespasses are not imputed to them, the preaching of the Gospel brings peace through the remission of sins.

3. Hence He sends the ministers to remit sins. "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them." This is the power of the Gospel. If its preaching is to have any effect at all, this must be the effect, that men's sins are remitted. If the Gospel has not this power when men preach it, their preaching is vain; for without remission of sins there is no salvation. About this power of remitting sins there is much error and much dispute among Christians and others. Some deny the power entirely, some claim it in an undue degree, or rather in an unscriptural sense. Some deem it a little thing to bear false witness against the whole Lutheran Church—the mother Church of Protestantism, and still by far the largest of all Protestant Churches—as though they would not have to give an account of it on the judgment day. Ignorance will surely not excuse such persons; for they have no reason to be ignorant of the Church's teachings, where opportunities are so abundant of knowing them; and besides this, people have no right to speak where their ignorance is so great and so palpable. But human prejudices are against the truth in all divine things; and I confess that human reason, without revelation, would not devise or prefer the Lutheran doctrine upon the subject in hand, which is the Bible doctrine. It is plain that the Bible does say: "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them." And whatever opinions we may entertain about it, this must be unquestionable, that in some way these disciples, whom our

Lord addressed, did receive the power to forgive sins. To deny this is plain unbelief. Nor is the meaning difficult to apprehend: it is too plain to admit of any dispute. The only question that can arise, therefore, among those who believe the Bible to be true, is this, whether the power was limited to that age and time, or whether it was given to the disciples in all time; and if it continues, whether it is the prerogative of a few, or belongs substantially to all disciples. That the idea of receiving forgiveness of sins through men is hooted at, we all know; and that in this hooting there is no discrimination exercised, generally, we all have means of knowing. Let us reverently look at the matter. It is said generally, by those who reject the passage as applicable to all ages, that the intention was merely to give the power of forgiving sins to the apostles, without bestowing the same gift upon their successors. But how is it supposed that they had such power? If they were endowed with the power to remit or retain sin at their own option, without any reference to the will of another, in whose name and by whose authority they acted, they must have been elevated to Deity; for Deity alone can forgive sins originally, and all others can do it only ministerially, that is, as the servants of God. I trust that no one will so far forget what is due to God, as to deify man, even an apostolic man, who is a sinner like the rest of the human race, and who would least desire to be extolled at the hazard of disparaging the mighty Savior. If, again, the apostles had some special extraordinary illumination or spiritual endowment in virtue of which they could do what no other Christian could do, namely, forgive men their sins, why, the Roman Catholic theory is the correct one; and the only point of controversy between them and the scoffing Protestants is, whether such extraordinary endowments were continued; and in this controversy it would probably be easy for the Papists to stand their ground against all ob-

jectors. But there is no proof of any such special super-Christian gift; the power here spoken of was given to all the disciples and was not here, or any other where, limited to a particular age or class. In Matt. 18, 15–18, we have the same power given to the whole Church, without any kind of restriction to special persons. What follows from this? Manifestly this, that there is no extraordinary endowment above that of faith in Christ requisite; that the Word of the Lord, which one Christian has as well as another, is always powerful, and always brings peace through the forgiveness of sins, no matter who proclaims it. That the ministers of the Gospel are often spoken of in this connection is owing simply to the fact that the preaching of the Word, and thus the bestowal of grace unto salvation through the Word, is their special vocation in this life. Not that they only have the power, but that they ordinarily exercise it, as it belongs to their calling. The truth then is this, that inasmuch as Christ actually died for all men, the salvation is effectual for all men; this salvation is offered in the Word, which conveys it to the soul, and they that believe embrace the proffered gift and enjoy life everlasting.

You see, my brethren, that our Lord not only pronounced peace to them who lived during His visible sojourn here on earth, He pronounces peace still through the remission of sins; for we speak in His name; He speaks through us, as through His servants; and whose soever sins we remit, they are remitted, since His Word is precisely the same whether He speaks it, or you or I speak it. It is the power of the Word, not of the minister. And this Word is presented to you to-day again. O that you all believed it, and realized it, when I say to you, in Jesus' name, Peace be unto you! Amen.

Second Sunday after Easter—Misericordias Domini.

JOHN 10, 11–16.

I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is a hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth; and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good Shepherd and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one Shepherd.

Brethren Beloved in the Lord:

"Ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." These are the consolatory words of this day's Epistle. Man has wandered away from his God through sin and finds no rest and no comfort. He is like a sheep that has strayed from the green pastures and still waters, and from the tender shepherd's care, and wanders about hungry, and unprotected, in barren wastes among prowling wolves. Without God and without hope in the world, he is wretched beyond expression. But his Maker is merciful and sent him deliverance. The Son of God came to save that which was lost. And He has found us and blessed us. We were as sheep going astray, but are now returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. That good Shepherd speaks to us again to-day, and how sweet and solacing are His words! Listen to them, and learn to know and love better

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

1. *He lays down His life for the sheep;* 2. *He cares for the sheep as His own;* 3. *He gathers His sheep into one blessed fold.*

I. Jesus shows that He is the good Shepherd by the sacrifice which He makes to rescue the sheep from death. "I am the good Shepherd," He says; "the good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep. But he that is a hireling, and not the Shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth; and the wolf catcheth them and scattereth the sheep." The Savior loved us even unto death, and laid down His own life to rescue us from the fierce wolf of hell who sought to devour us. "The good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep."

1. The great love of our Lord is shown in the rescue of the unworthy. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John 4, 9. 10. If there had been righteousness and worthiness in us, it would still have been amazing love in the Shepherd to give His life for the sheep. But it was because there was nothing but sin and rebellion in man that the great sacrifice upon the cross was necessary. He loved His enemies and died to save them. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Rom. 5, 6–8. If the righteous Lord had given men their due, He would have consigned them to everlasting misery. That

is what their sins deserved. There was nothing in us on account of which He could be induced to come to our rescue at the cost of His own life. The sheep had wantonly chosen to follow the wolf rather than the Shepherd, and they deserved destruction. But the love of our Lord is infinite, and He was willing to come to our deliverance while we were yet enemies. He died for the ungodly, who were His foes. Truly He is a good Shepherd.

2. And these foes were redeemed at the amazing cost of the Shepherd's own precious life. He died to save them. That was the only way in which they could be saved. Sin had come and brought death. From that there was no escape. Even the Son of God could not escape it when He came to take the sinner's place and rescue him by bearing the sinner's penalty. Therefore in His infinite mercy He became incarnate. He saw that He must suffer and die to effect His gracious purpose of delivering us from the consequences of our sin, and He became a man like unto us that He might suffer and die in our stead and thus secure our acquittal. He overcame the foul fiend that sought and still seeks our destruction, but it was only by tasting death for every man and thus fulfilling all righteousness. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Heb. 2, 14. 15. It was a tremendous price that must be paid for the redemption of our sinful race; but it was infinite love that undertook and executed the work. Our Savior is the good Shepherd who giveth His life for the sheep. Only by delivering them from the grasp of death and the curse of sin could He bring them into His blessed fold and prepare them for glory. We are bought with a price. We are the purchase

of His blood. O soul, do not forget that. Consider what it cost to bring us back to the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, and praise the good Shepherd's name forever.

II. Jesus, as the good Shepherd, cares for the sheep as His own. "The hireling fleeth, because he is a hireling and careth not for the sheep. I am the good Shepherd, and know my sheep and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father." The blessed Savior fulfilled His holy Father's will in caring for the sheep. The Father sent Him in love to rescue man, and He died in love to effect the gracious purpose. He knows the Father and leads the redeemed to the Father's house according to the Father's will. He knows His sheep, and they know Him and follow Him. He is the good Shepherd: He feeds them and protects them.

1. It is a great blessing that our dear Lord, who purchased us with His own precious blood, supplies the wants of our souls every day by His grace, as every day He supplies the wants of our bodies by His providence. "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul; He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." Ps. 23, 1–3. This is the happy experience of those who have returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls and who hearken to the voice of His Word. This is in accord with the prophecies which went before concerning our Savior. Thus Jehovah, referring to Christ under the name of David, who was a type of our Lord, says in Ezekiel: "I will set up one Shepherd over them, and He shall feed them, even my servant David; He shall feed them and shall be their Shepherd." Ezek. 34, 23. He did feed them with heavenly food, and feeds them still. Rich supplies are granted us every day in His Word and Sacrament, and the souls that He has bought with a price

are nourished and sustained by His grace unto everlasting life. With a tender Shepherd's care He supplies every want. "The Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly. O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in Thee." Ps. 84, 11. 12. He leads us and feeds us, and we shall not want.

2. And the same good Shepherd, who leads us into green pastures and beside the still waters, also protects us against the dangers that beset us. The blood-thirsty wolf who wrought destruction in Paradise is still prowling about and seeking souls as his prey. Against him the power of man cannot prevail. Satan is strong and cunning, and if we had no defense but that of our own might, our destruction would be inevitable. But we have a good Shepherd who cares for His sheep, and who is mightier than the wicked foe that seeks to devour us. He is not a hireling. "He that is a hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth." Our good Shepherd even laid down His life for the sheep: how should He not now, since we are delivered from the curse and gathered into His fold, defend us against the assaults of the wolves! All power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth, and He will use that power for our protection. While we abide with Him we have nothing to fear. He is the good Shepherd. "My sheep hear my voice," He tells us, "and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." John 10, 27. 28. Only hear His voice, and follow Him: then no power of earth or hell shall be able to harm you. But beware of false prophets, who come unto you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves. They mean to lead you away from Jesus, your good Shepherd, and thus compass your

destruction. Abide with Him, and you are safe. He protects His sheep against every foe.

III. He gathers His sheep into one blessed fold. He calls them by the Spirit through His Word, and those who heed the call and keep His sayings are one in Him, and there is one fold and one Shepherd.

1. Our Lord brings us into His fold by His grace. In our natural condition we are not His people. "You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." Eph. 2, 1. "Ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." 1 Pet. 2, 25. Hence St. Paul says that we give "thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son, in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins." Col. 1, 12–14. Not all men are in the happy fold which is led and fed by the good Shepherd. Some do not hear His voice and do not know Him. They are not His because they resist the Spirit who calls them and would enlighten them and save them. But some by His grace believe, and are thus joined to the goodly company that follows Jesus and is forever blest. "Ye believe not," Jesus said to the Jews, "because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me." John 10, 26. 27. All who believe in the Lord Jesus are recognized as His and united with Him as a blessed congregation of saints, whom He leads through the tribulations of time to the glories of eternity.

2. And the fold is but one, as the Shepherd is but one. "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also must I bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one Shepherd." The prophecy

was fulfilled in the times of the apostles, when Jews and Gentiles were gathered into one church.

This is clear from the context. When it is said that there are other sheep which are not of this fold and which must be united with it under the one Shepherd, it is plain that the Christian Church already existed, and was not to be called into being by adding those other sheep to the fold. It is plain, moreover, that the Christian fold is the one referred to, when one fold and one Shepherd are spoken of. Therefore the original fold, to which the other sheep of our Lord, which are not of it, are to be added, must be the Jewish believers, which was the Lord's Church from the first; and the other sheep, which were to be added, were converts from heathenism. But these two should not stand as two separate folds under the new dispensation. All believers should form one body. They should be one fold, embracing all from every nation and in every age, who should hear the good Shepherd's voice. The believing Gentiles should form one body with the believing Jews.

That this is the true import of the passage may be gathered also from other places, which, taken in connection with our text, render the meaning so clear that it is a wonder that any diligent Bible reader should err respecting it. Our Lord says, in connection with the centurion's faith, which surpassed any found in Israel, that "many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." Matt. 8, 11. St. Paul says: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Gal. 3, 28. And again he says: "Remember that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ,

being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometime were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace; who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." Eph. 2, 11–14. Now, since the partition is broken down, there is but one fold, and into this fold the sheep from among the heathen, as well as those from among the Jews, are gathered under the one good Shepherd.

In the face of this plain Scripture truth to imagine that the text contains a prophecy of the future union of different denominations, or even of different religions, into one visible organization, is but one of those vagaries of which man's imagination is so often guilty when left to take its own course regardless of the divine Word. It is wild to suppose this, when the meaning is so plain, that all distinction between Jew and Gentile shall vanish in Christianity. It is wilder yet when we consider that the sin of schism and heresy is one that grows naturally out of man's depraved heart, and must therefore remain as long as human depravity continues. "When ye come together in the Church, I hear that there be dissensions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you." 1 Cor. 11, 18–19. So our Lord said also: "It is impossible but that offenses will come: but woe unto him through whom they come." Luke 17, 1. To suppose, therefore, that all the multitudinous sects abounding in the world at present, will at some future time unite into one denomination, making one fold in this external sense, is just as unscriptural as it is unreasonable. Men's pride will still prompt them to originate sects until the end; and dissatisfied spirits will no doubt continue,

when they cannot rule the Church of God, to organize churches of their own, which they will pronounce superior to all others. If we could expect natural depravity to cease, and only then, we could reasonably expect that what St. Peter says, 2 Pet. 2, 1–2, should cease: "There were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways."

There is no need, either, for such union in order to secure unity. The people of God are already united under one Shepherd in one fold. That all Christians are not indeed one in externals is manifest enough. They cannot all be together in one place, but are scattered far and wide in the world. They have not one form of government and are not under one temporal ruler. Nor is this necessary. They are known by different names, which is very much to be deplored; but it is not essential to the unity of the Church that all should have one name. They have not the same human ceremonies and forms, nor need they have in order to be one. The unity consists in their having the one faith in the one Lord. The Church is essentially invisible, and all true believers constitute it as the one body of Christ.

It is, of course, by no means immaterial to what denomination we belong, when these differ so widely. We are bound to hold the truth and confess it. We must search the Scriptures, and believe and confess only what the Scriptures teach. But our hearts must not be allowed to harbor the thought that only those who know the complete truth are Christians. If we only hold Christ by faith we are safe, though we have much yet to learn from His Word. And the Lord knoweth them that are His in every community. The Church is composed of all true believers.

Not the congregations as they appear before our eyes are the Church in the proper sense. We see the multitude who hear the Word and receive the Sacraments. We hear their professions. In charity we are bound to believe each one sincere until his life proves the contrary. But God alone sees the heart. And in His eye the whole multitude of true believers, throughout the whole earth, is one. There is one fold and one Shepherd, notwithstanding the unhappy divisions existing in the visible Church.

And in this fold, under the good Shepherd, we are called to live and labor. Let us listen to His voice with ever increasing attention, turning away from every stranger's voice who would lead us away from Christ. Let us hear and heed His words; for His guidance is our bliss. He leadeth us into green pastures beside the still waters. Amen.

Third Sunday after Easter—Jubilate.

JOHN 16, 16–23.

A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father. Then said some of His disciples among themselves, What is this that He saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me; and again, a little while, and ye shall see me; and, Because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that He saith, A little while? we cannot tell what He saith. Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask Him, and said unto them, Do ye inquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me? Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you. And in that day ye shall ask me nothing.

Dear Brethren:

Here on earth we are exposed to continual change. Night and day, summer and winter, heat and cold, succeed each other incessantly as time moves on. Nations and people are subject to similar vicissitude. They come and go, prosper and decline continually: they do not continue in one stay. So joys and sorrows come and go. Where adversity frowns to-day prosperity may smile to-morrow: he who struts in purple and fine linen now, may sit to-morrow in ragged misery. But these vicissitudes are only temporal: all things are rolling onward in their changes to a state of permanence. In eternity man will be unchangingly and unchangeably blessed or miserable. This truth

should give us courage to wage the warfare of life upon settled principles of right without yielding to man's threats or allurements. For as we journey towards a place which is free from change, we should, as candidates for perpetual glory, have so much of eternity within us, even before the last great change comes, as to remain unchanged in our love and practice of the truth. This alone will enable us to quit ourselves like men in the changes through which we must pass; whilst, if we live regardless of the future, we will walk unworthy of immortal souls in the vicissitudes of earth, and bring upon ourselves everlasting ruin in eternity. In a little while we will have abiding happiness or wretchedness instead of change, and to barter away eternal happiness for a little seeming joy here on earth, is, as all must acknowledge, consummate folly. Sorrow may come to the Christian here because he is a Christian, but joy cometh in the morning; the semblance of joy may come to the infidel because he is an infidel, but sorrow cometh in the night. This the text brings forcibly before our minds, while it offers for our consideration

THE SORROW AND JOY OF THE CHRISTIAN AND OF THE WORLD.

This we will consider with regard to *I. The little while of our Lord's Crucifixion and Resurrection*, and *II. The little while of our earthly life.*

I. We turn our attention then, in the first place, to the sorrow and joy of the Christian and the world in regard to the CRUCIFIXION AND RESURRECTION of Jesus.

1. That the CRUCIFIXION would not affect worldlings and Christians alike is plain.

The Christians have sorrow on account of it. A little

while and they should not see the Lord; then they should weep and lament. They should not see Him, because He was pleased to deliver Himself into the hands of His enemies for our offenses, and to taste death for every man. They should not see Him, after a little while, because it was ordained that He should die rather than that all mankind should perish. He chose to give Himself a ransom for many. That His followers did not understand His meaning the text plainly tells us. They said therefore, "What is this that He saith, a little while? We cannot tell what He saith." Nor could we expect it otherwise. That their King should die, and thus for a little while be invisible to them, was just what they would not be likely to think, as their expectations still fastened upon an earthly realm with earthly glories. But He told them plainly that He would leave the world and go to the Father, as He came forth into the world from the Father. Then were their souls full of heaviness. They loved the Lord with an ardent love. He was all to them: they had forsaken all and followed Him. Without Him they would be mere orphans: quite helpless, quite hopeless. They cling to Him as to their dearest friend. But this is not all: they cling to Him as their only refuge and support. It was not yet clear to them what would be accomplished by His mission; to be separated from Him now seemed equivalent to a surrender of all their prospects. And this all the more when we consider that with their prospects they had mingled human error, on which account their hopes could not possibly be realized, if in a little while they should not see Him. His death could not be an impediment in the way of accomplishing His end, which was the establishment of a spiritual kingdom that should not be of this world. His death was a necessary condition of the attainment of that glorious end. But the disciples had not clear views of His purpose yet, and had therefore hopes which the Lord's teaching

had not warranted. These our Lord must disappoint in fact, as He had discountenanced them in word. And the disappointment must increase the pain of parting from their beloved Guide. Besides this, they would be exposed to the mockery of their foes, who would taunt them about their King that is dead, and about the glory which He should give who fell a prey to the malice of His enemies. No wonder it was declared to them: "Ye shall weep and lament;" "ye shall be sorrowful."

But as the Christians should weep and lament, their foes should be affected quite differently. "*The world shall rejoice.*" How different is the world's spirit from that of these sorrowing disciples! How great the contrast between the Christians' weeping and lamenting, and the worldlings' rejoicing! We can picture to ourselves this difference, when we look at the differences manifesting themselves now on many an occasion. As some lie on their wretched faces bewailing their weakness and their sin, the scoffer taunts and jeers, and the giddy worldling "whirls the wanton waltz" as though all earnest life were folly. The dying groans are faintly heard here, and there the loud laughter of revelry resounds that sneers at death. A little way from the ancient city, which is beautiful for situation, groans the dying Maker of all, in human form, with soul exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. Never did palm trees wave their branches over griefs and sufferings so intense; for never did soul before or since endure the sufferings of a ruined race which it chose to rescue. But in the city other sights were seen and other sounds were heard. Who knows how many enjoyed the "mirth and song and dance and wine" of giddy frivolity on that awful night of the garden agony, or laughed and quaffed and frolicked and rollicked while the head of meekness bowed in death for reckless men! And not only thus. Not only did the levity and pleasure-seeking of the world

continue, unconscious of the Lord of glory's death; but some rejoiced on this very account, knowing it and being gladdened by it. For we know how some mocked; how they jeeringly treated Him as king and bowed to Him; how they sneeringly said to Him that He should save Himself now, since He made such pretenses of saving others. And we may easily conceive how bitter enemies could hold their gleeful jubilee when they heard of the mighty Savior's death; how their hearts would be relieved from lingering fears that His words might prove true, and how they would bound for joy because the victory was won; their hearts' malicious devices were accomplished. "Verily, verily I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice."

2. Different from this was the sorrowing and rejoicing in regard to the blessed SAVIOR'S RESURRECTION. Here was sadness and gladness also; but the tables were turned; the Christian's time of rejoicing has come, and the world's time of sorrowing.

"A little while and ye shall not see me; and again a little while and ye shall see me." This was the Christian's comfort: a comfort which they could not fully realize, however, until the event had explained it. "Ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." When the blessed Lord rose from the dead that time of joy had come. The night of grief was past: the murky clouds had moved away, and the "morn bedecked the dewy east with roses." A sunshine was now in the shady place: the Lord, their Friend and Counsellor, their Strength and their Solace, was come again. "A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish for joy that a man is born into the world." The joy is so great that the pain when it is once past and has given place to pleasure, is

not remembered as such: the mind clings only to the joy. "Ye now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." As a woman has pain when her time has come, so the disciples had pain when the time of the Lord's departure was come; as a woman has joy when her child is born, so they had joy when their Lord came again. And this joy was not only because they had their Friend's gracious presence again to cheer them, but because their hopes in Him were restored, and their prospects, purified now by the probation through which they had passed, were in the way again of being realized. They should have a joy now that no man could take away, and receive such an illumination from above that they would not need to ask anything again—the Holy Spirit would lead them into all truth.

But whilst the Christians rejoiced, the world's time for sorrow had come. The Galilean whom they had murdered—was He come again? What wretchedness the affirmative answer to this question must bring upon the enemies of truth! "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy!" They desired to be rid of Him, and now, though they had used the last means of riddance, He was before them again. Their joy of being free from Him must thus of course be put to flight, and sorrow come in its room. The unbelievers might indeed continue on in their course of levity and sin; they might still serve Satan rather than God, and become slaves to their own lusts and the lusts of others; but they could not do this as they could when they had supposed the preacher of repentance dead. They might go on; but now and then the question might still arise and spoil all their lewd pleasure and leave them naught but pain. Is there not a judgment after death, where an account must be given of our life, and may not that which Jesus of Nazareth taught, whom we crucified, but

of whom they say that He is risen again, prove true? It is easy enough to sneer at the question; thousands probably do sneer at it who in their consciences are gnawed by it as by a worm: but it is not so easy to stifle it and resist its influence upon our peace. And where conscience is seared the case is worse than where it stings and burns. A condition has then been reached which is near that of a brute; and the misery is all the greater because the poor heart has grown so callous as not even to be capable of realizing it. Thus does joy and sorrow come upon Christians and worldlings; but the worldling's joy is changed to perpetual sorrow, and the Christian's sorrow to perpetual joy.

II. So IT IS IN THE LITTLE WHILE OF MAN'S EARTHLY LIFE; which, compared with eternity, is but a very little while.

1. *The Christians have sorrows here which shall be changed into perpetual joy.*

They have their portion of sorrows here. They are not by any means exempt from the sufferings which are the consequence of sin's entrance into the world. And although the eternal consequences of sin, death, eternal death, are not entailed upon those who believe, yet these must suffer the natural effects of sin, which still exists within them and in the world around them. Hence they are subject to pain and sickness of body as well as those who reject the truth. The fact of having such sufferings neither proves the sufferer's faith nor unbelief. So they have their share of mental suffering—perhaps a larger share than those who are of the world, because their conscience is more tender and more enlightened. wherefore their regrets of wrongs done are more frequent and intense. And this sorrow for sin will continue theirs until their life has closed on earth. For at no time will we be able to call ourselves perfect: at all times the words

of the apostle will apply: "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." Whilst we are imperfect, we will have errors to regret and sins to bewail. The Christian's life is one of daily sorrow and repentance on account of sin. And although his sorrowings in this respect are far from despair, inasmuch as he knows his sins to be forgiven richly and daily through faith in Jesus' name, yet they are actual sufferings. Then he is exposed to losses and crosses in regard to temporal possessions. He may by fire or flood, by theft or dishonesty, be deprived of his earthly goods, in whole or in part; and while the Christian never sets his heart on those things, so as to become hopeless and despairing on account of being called upon to part with them: for his great treasure remains even when he has lost all that God had lent him here below: yet he is not insensible to the hardships and discomforts which men must sometimes bear on account of such losses, nor to the conveniences and comforts of the present life, which these temporal goods secure. And what is of more moment than sickness or poverty, the Christian is exposed to the calumny of enemies and the venom of malicious slander. They are evil spoken of, very frequently, on account of the good which they do; for to the foolish world the wisdom of God, by which Christ's disciples are guided, seems foolishness. Their charity and their earnestness are often styled obstinacy and anger. But not only are their motives harshly judged and their deeds evil spoken of on this account, as was the case with our Savior and the apostles abundantly, but they are maligned and slandered besides, as deeds and words are imputed to them of which they are not guilty. In this way their good name is stolen away and their honor is tarnished. And whilst they can endure it to be called Beelzebub, since they called the Master so, and whilst they grow not weary in well-doing because they are

everywhere spoken against, yet it is painful to endure it: insensible to such suffering God's children are not. "In the world ye shall have tribulation:" it remains tribulation even when it is endured with the greatest patience: it pains, though it does not discourage. But when pain is given by stealing away one's good name in such a way as to disparage one's testimony for the truth, it is doubly severe: it not only hurts because of one's own honor, but also on account of the honor of God, which is of infinitely greater importance. To disparage me, the Christian will think, is not much in itself; for it matters but little, in itself, whether I am small or great in the world's eye; but to rob me of my influence for good, to lame me in such a manner that I cannot bring upon God's name the glory which were otherwise possible, is not a matter of indifference, as my zeal for my Father's glory induces me to wish that my testimony were of greater force than it can be even in the best case. To render it of less weight by injuring my good name is therefore a sorrow. Thus the Christian has sorrowings in this world—sufferings with regard to body and soul, to property and name.

But a little while and we shall see Jesus, and these sufferings must cease: *our sorrow shall be changed into joy*. The influences of such sufferings are confined to time: they cannot reach beyond these confines. Sickness and weakness of body, with the aches and anguishes which are incident to it here on earth, will be known no more in the Christian's perpetual home: in that place where, in a little while, he shall see the Lord. The sufferings caused by a consciousness of sin shall also cease; for if the flesh continues all the while of our sojourn here on earth, it will not attain to heaven: it is entirely stripped off when this mortal puts on immortality. The flesh dies: it must be kept under the process of crucifixion while we remain on earth: it dies when the body dies, when a new

man fully arises, freed from the conflicts with the old, which shall dwell in the presence of God in righteousness and purity forever. So sin shall not enter the land of pure delight and perfect holiness: sin, which is a weight so easily besetting us while we are upon earth, finds no admission into heaven. It cannot, therefore, give us sorrow any more, after a little while. Losses of property cannot give us trouble there. For all things exist unchangeably the same in that abode of happiness, and nothing fades and nothing fails, and all things are ours. Nor can slander reach us there. The envenomed tongue, which seeks the ruin of others, is banished to hell; the dwellers in the pure regions of heaven, where all the air is love, seek each other's happiness, never each other's pain, and therefore only speak well of each other. Thus all the sorrows of time are temporal: they extend not into the eternal world. Indeed, they work out glory for us in heaven. God's grace is increased as we grow in strength, and strength is increased by the probation of suffering. And God graciously rewards, in heaven, the patience of hope, the sufferings endured for the name of the Lord Jesus. The sorrows of Christians here will end in the perfect bliss of a better world in a little while. A little while and earth's stormy night will be over. And though often while we labor here we feel it sensibly that Jesus is not seen, yet we always know that in a little while we shall see Him: see Him where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest. "Ye now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you."

2. *The worldlings have pleasures here which shall be changed to perpetual pain.*

Worldlings have pleasures here. Not as though they had all the joy and Christians all the sorrows in this world. Far from it. The follower of Jesus has pleasure in God's

guidance here and in his bountiful prospects hereafter, to which the best of unbelievers' pleasures are not worthy to be compared. And the latter has sorrows enough which are occasioned by his sins and vices: sufferings to which the believer is not exposed. But sinful pleasures, however low, and however much inferior to the purer and more refined pleasures of holiness, and especially of faith and hope, pass for pleasures still. The gratification of lust pleases: the satisfaction of appetites, however mean and unworthy, delights. Then the worldling purchases many a pleasing thing by his sin. Sometimes it is worldly goods. By meanness and dishonesty, by theft from God and man, these are sometimes acquired; and although the pleasure which they bring is very dearly purchased under such circumstances, because a greater pain is secured, after all, than pleasure, yet it is a pleasure, though often purchased at such an exorbitant price. Sometimes it is worldly honors. The holiest principles are sacrificed in order to gain the crowd's applause; the peace of a quiet approving conscience, and the smile and favor of the Lord are paid for the smile and favor of an undiscriminating rabble. What a merciless price! What consummate folly! And yet this gives pleasure; and these are the pleasures which unbelief secures. In this way the world shall rejoice. Much of this joy is but a sham. But God means to bless even them. Those goods which are really their greatest gifts are meant to lead them to the perception of God's goodness. "Knowest thou not that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" Rom. 2, 4. God is good to all: He desires that all should be blest: He offers blessings to all. But as the unbeliever cannot share the blessings of eternity, inasmuch as they can be embraced only by faith, God would give them the blessings which all can share alike, so far as the mere gift is concerned, namely, the possessions of time. But when this mercy of

God is not acknowledged, and men seek only selfish pleasure, the wretched pleasure of sin, the gladness will soon be turned to sadness.

A little while and they shall weep and lament. All their temporal possessions, in which alone they had found their pleasure, must fade; the things which are seen are temporal. And they procure no heavenly treasures to supply their place when they have failed. Their loss leaves a blank. So sorrow comes for former rejoicing. And not only the sorrow of treasures lost. This would alone be great enough. But it is not all. The sorrow of perpetual pain in the blackness of darkness, with the undying worm gnawing insatiably at the heart—this is the greatest of all. O, if only this is shunned—if only this were escaped! But while earthly joy alone is sought—while the truth, and the pleasure of a clear conscience which the belief of the truth affords, are despised,—sorrowings eternal in hell is all that can be expected, is all that can be attained.

And as this shall be in a little while, flee, O flee from the wrath to come by embracing Jesus! Come to Him, and enjoy His guidance here and bliss hereafter. Come to the good Shepherd, who in a little while will take you to Himself above, where your heart shall forever rejoice and your joy no man taketh from you. Amen.

Fourth Sunday after Easter.—Cantate.

JOHN 16, 5–15.

But now I go my way to Him that sent me: and none of you asketh me, Whither goest Thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. And when He is come He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment; of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He shall shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

Beloved in Christ Jesus:

When our Lord said to His disciples, "A little while and ye shall not see me," their hearts were saddened. That was natural. The thought of parting from Him in whom all their hopes centered was painful. But this was because they did not yet fully understand the purpose of His coming and the way in which that purpose should be accomplished. "Again a little while and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father." That was not plain to them. He must taste death for every man, and therefore must needs leave them for a little while. But He conquered death, and in a little while they should see Him again as their risen and triumphant Lord. But after forty days He must again pass out of their sight and go to the Father.

His death and resurrection and ascension were all necessary to effect our salvation. "Now I go my way to Him that sent me, and none of you asketh me, Whither goest Thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart I will send Him unto you." There would be no grace and peace and comfort and joy for sinful man if our Redeemer had not secured it all, and sent the Comforter to apply it all by the means of grace. That was the object of His going away. Our text makes this plain. It shows us that He went to send us the Comforter, and points out

THE OBJECT OF THE HOLY GHOST'S MISSION.

To this let us give due attention that we may be instructed and comforted. Our lesson shows us that the Holy Ghost was sent 1. *To reprove the world*, 2. *To lead into all truth and thus glorify Jesus.*

I. "When He is come," our Lord says, "He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." He was sent to proclaim the truth in Jesus, and His testimony should convict the world. It cannot be gainsaid. Men may reject it, but their own consciences bear witness against them. And that of which He testifies with convincing and rebuking power is threefold.

1. He will reprove the world "of sin, because they believe not in me." Faith in the Lord Jesus is the only way of escape from the condemnation of sin; unbelief is the great sin, persistence in which brings death and eternal woe.

All men are under condemnation by nature as well as by practice. They are sinners by birth, and have no power

to remedy the hereditary evil. There is no health and no strength in our fallen human nature. Only the grace of our Lord Jesus, which the Holy Ghost imparts, can help us. Thus St. Paul writes to the Ephesians: "You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; among whom we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as others." Eph. 2, 1–3. Sin has corrupted our whole nature, and therefore necessarily corrupts all our thoughts and feelings, our words and works. From this sin and its dreadful consequences there is no escape except by taking refuge in our crucified Redeemer. He has borne all its penalty in our behalf, and whosoever believeth in Him, the Savior of the world, is saved: all the rest perish. Of this the Holy Spirit convinces men. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." John 3, 36. The wages of sin is death, and for that there is no remedy but the blood of Jesus, whose benefits become ours only by faith. He that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned. All the burden and all the curse of sin remains upon those who do not believe in Jesus, in whose name alone there is salvation. "He that believeth on Him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." John 3, 18. Though Christ died for all, the sin and its condemnation remains upon all who do not believe.

Indeed, the sin is only increased when the Holy Spirit offers peace and pardon through the blood of Jesus, and thankless men reject it. "This is the record, that God

hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." 1 John 5, 11. 12. But when this record is brought to human souls with convincing power and they wickedly reject it, their damnation is just. This is the greatest of all sins, that lost souls spurn the gracious remedy that is offered them and choose, notwithstanding all the reproof of the Spirit, to die in their sins and go down in endless misery. We are prone to speak with horror of those who commit such dreadful sins as robbery, or adultery, or murder; but there is no sin among men that is worthy to be compared to the unutterable folly and wickedness and wretchedness involved in the rejection of the merciful Savior, who comes to deliver from endless woe and all whose sacrifice and all whose pleading is despised. The Holy Spirit comes to reprove of sin, because they believe not on the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

2. Furthermore, when the Spirit is come, our Lord says, He shall reprove the world "of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more." We are prone to seek righteousness in our own inward sanctification and outward work. To our natural reason it seems that there could be no other righteousness for us. But the Holy Spirit shows that such reasoning is vain. The law is indeed holy, and he who kept the law would therefore needs be holy also. But sin, of which the Spirit reproves us, is the opposite of such holiness. We are sinful, not righteous. Therefore the Scriptures say: "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Rom. 3, 20. When we examine ourselves by the commandments of God we do not find ourselves holy, but just the reverse. We see our sin, but find no such

righteousness as they require. The law is spiritual, but I am carnal. Therefore the law does not justify, but condemns. If we would escape from this condemnation we must have a righteousness which is not found in our own obedience and merit. That is the righteousness which our blessed Savior secured for us and of which the Holy Spirit reproves the world. He went through shame and suffering and death to the Father. But He wrought righteousness and endured the penalty of unrighteousness in our stead and on our behalf. All His passion and cross were due to us. The wages of sin came upon our merciful Substitute. By His stripes we are healed. And the righteousness of our Lord is made ours when we believe in this Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. We are justified by faith. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." Gal. 2, 16. Of this righteousness which is by faith, the Spirit bears witness as the only righteousness which can avail before God. It is the righteousness of the Gospel, not of the law. It is the righteousness which the Lord Jesus came on earth to acquire, and which now that He has fulfilled it and gone to the Father, is brought in the Gospel and appropriated by faith. And Jesus who has gone to the Father still pleads and intercedes for His people, whom He loved even unto death. "If any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world," 1 John 2, 1. 2. Therefore cast away all confidence in any other righteousness and listen to the testimony of the Holy Spirit as He powerfully convinces the world of a righteousness in which the

sinner can stand before God, even the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ embraced by faith.

3. Finally, when the Comforter is come He will reprove the world "of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." Our Savior, when He acquired our righteousness by His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, delivered us from sin and the power of the devil. The old serpent that seeks our destruction is judged. He has been overcome by the great Victor in the strife. He blotted out "the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." Col. 4, 14. 15. Against the malicious prince of this world we could do nothing. He held mankind firmly in his grasp. But the Conqueror has come, the victory is won, and the prince of this world is judged. "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace; but when a stronger than he shall come upon him and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armor wherein he trusted and divideth his spoils." Luke 11, 22. The prince of darkness was disarmed by the King of glory. And now the Spirit convicts the world that the foe is doomed, and that the same judgment must come upon those who choose, notwithstanding all that was done to set souls free, to remain bondmen of the doomed prince. "He that committeth sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." 1 John 3, 8. It is the basest slavery to be subject to a tyrannical prince from whose usurped dominion and cruel despotism we have been delivered. Brethren, give earnest heed to the voice of the Spirit, that ye may flee from sin and not fall into the condemnation which is denounced against the world that lieth

in wickedness and serves sin, notwithstanding that its prince is judged.

II. The Comforter whom Jesus, our risen and ascended Lord, sent to men, should not only reprove the world of sin and righteousness and judgment, but should also lead His disciples into all truth, as that truth was previously spoken by Christ and His apostles, and thus glorify His great name, in whom alone there is salvation. "When He, the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth; for He shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak; and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify me; for He shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you."

1. He shall guide into all truth. That is a precious promise. By nature our understandings are darkened, and we have no means of knowing the things which belong to our peace. Nature reveals nothing of the righteousness which avails before God. The earth and sea and sky tell us nothing about a way of salvation for lost souls. There is truth within the reach of our natural faculties, and no one is to be blamed for seeking it. On the contrary, all truth is valuable, though it pertain only to this life. But that which nature gives can reach no further than the temporal. It opens no vista into the eternal. The things that are most needful for us to know are taught us by the Spirit of God, and can be taught us only by Him. "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory, which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep

things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in Him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." 1 Cor. 2, 7–11. All truth unto salvation is given us by revelation through the Spirit of God, and can be given only by such revelation. There is no other way in which that truth can be known. Therefore it was needful that the Spirit should guide the apostles into all truth, as it is needful that He should guide all believers. Without His light all would be dark; without His guidance all would be error. He gave the first disciples the word of truth by inspiration, that they might know the mind and plan of God, and guided them into the knowledge of God's ways and workings, that they might daily enjoy His comfort and peace. And in after years, even until this present day, the same Spirit has been the guide of all believers into the truth of Jesus, as that truth had been revealed to prophets and apostles, and is now written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

2. The truth into which the Holy Spirit guides the children of God is the saving truth revealed in His Word. There is not a truth of the Spirit distinct from the truth in Jesus and apart from the truth which is contained in the Holy Scriptures. "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Pet. 1, 12. All the revelation given in the Bible was for man's enlightenment in the way of salvation and for the bestowal of spiritual power from on high, that he might have life through Jesus' name. Therefore our Lord says to the Jews which believed on Him, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8, 31. 32. Therefore too St. Paul writes: "Continue thou in the things which thou hast

learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them, and that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." 2 Tim. 3, 14–17. The Spirit of truth is the Spirit who speaks by the Word which is written for our instruction and salvation. His is not another way and truth and life. He has no other light to bring than that which shines in Jesus and His Word, and no other plan of salvation than that which was wrought out by our Lord in going to the Father and which is declared to us in the Gospel of His grace. Therefore Jesus tells us that when the Spirit is come "He will guide you into all truth; for He shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak." Therefore it is against the Scriptures, which are written for our learning, to imagine that the Spirit has something else to tell us than that which is contained in the written Word, and that He has some way of making us wise unto salvation besides that of the written Word. To give way to such a delusion is to yield to the allurements of Satan, who would draw us away from the Word in order that he may seduce us from the truth and lead us to a refuge of lies. Heed the Spirit's instruction as it is given us in the Word, and ye shall be guided into all truth, and the truth shall make you free. The Spirit guides us into the one truth which is in Jesus and which saves the soul.

3. Therefore our Savior says: "He shall glorify me; for He shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I that He shall take of mine and shall show it unto you." There is salvation only in Christ. The Holy Spirit has

no way of imparting life than by taking from our Savior's fullness and bestowing it upon us. "Neither is there salvation in any other," said St. Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost; "for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Acts 4, 12. The Holy Spirit teaches the truth contained in Holy Scripture, and that is the truth in Jesus. He died for our sins and was raised again for our justification. In Him there is life; through Him is the forgiveness of sins; He has gone to prepare a place for us, that where He is we may be also. The Holy Spirit comes to glorify Jesus, who is the only Savior and the only hope of the lost world. He shows us that there is nothing but sin in us, but He shows us the redemption which is in Christ Jesus and leads us to a knowledge of the truth, that the blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin. He alone is the Savior, and all the glory belongs to Him and only to Him. The words of the Father and the words of the Son and the words of the Holy Spirit are all the same, and the substance of them all is that Christ died for our sins and that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. He has saved us; to Him be glory forever.

Dear brethren, hear and heed what the Spirit saith to the churches. There is no light and no life in you by nature. There is no prospect for sinful souls but that of eternal condemnation. But Christ hath redeemed you, and has sent the Comforter to cheer your hearts with the assurance, that though you have sinned you can be justified before God through faith in the Redeemer's name. He would lead you to-day into that truth, that you might rejoice in His grace. Close not your hearts against the Comforter's voice. Hear and believe, and you shall be saved, and give glory to Jesus forever. Amen.

Fifth Sunday after Easter — Rogate.

JOHN 16, 23–30.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father. At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father. His disciples said unto Him, Lo, now speakest Thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. Now are we sure that Thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask Thee: by this we believe that Thou camest forth from God.

We have heard, my brethren, that Christians, in this world, shall have tribulation. It was so in the beginning and remains so still. "With many a weary step and many a groan" they pursue the path of suffering which the Savior trod before them, notwithstanding that they rejoice in the Lord always. It would be dreadful if they were called to journey thus without divine assistance. But they are not so called. The Lord, as a good Shepherd, is always with them; and they have the privilege of asking with the assurance that whatsoever they should ask in His name they would receive. Jesus taught His people to pray: prayer was enjoined upon them as a solemn duty and a precious privilege. Every good and perfect gift cometh down from above; but it is our Maker's will that we should ask for good gifts; and although temporal blessings are received also by those who ask not, yet the actual enjoyment of all blessings, and the reception of all spirit-

ual gifts, is conditioned by prayer. This our Lord teaches us in to-day's lesson, which brings before us the subject of

CHRISTIAN PRAYER.

Let us inquire 1. *Why does the Christian pray?* and 2. *How does the Christian pray?*

I. WHY DOES THE CHRISTIAN PRAY? The question is easily answered; and yet it is not useless to set the answer again fairly before our souls for our admonition and for our consolation. Let us do so.

1. *The Christian prays because this is the will of God.* Our heavenly Father has clearly shown it to be His will, for He has commanded us to pray. "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full," are our Lord's words in the text; and this command is frequently repeated in Holy Scripture. Thus St. Paul says to the Philippians, 4. 6: "Be careful for nothing: but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." So St. Peter enjoins, 1 Pet. 4, 8: "Be ye therefore sober and watch unto prayer."

It is to be observed here, what I fear many are inclined to forget, that prayer is just as much a duty as any virtue enjoined in the holy commandments, and its omission is just as much a sin. It is a great evil that many persons still persist in regarding only that as sinful which is revolting to the natural conscience, thus practically denying that our only rule of faith and practice is the Word of God. Indeed, prayer is prescribed in the decalogue, as well as enjoined anew by our Savior. For when the second commandment tells us that "we must not take the name of the Lord our God in vain," it plainly implies that we shall call upon that name, using it, but not abusing it. This is brought out by that master of Scripture exposition, Dr. Luther, in his master-piece, the Smaller Catechism of our

Church, when he gives it as the meaning of the second commandment, "that we should fear and love God, that we may not curse, swear, use witchcraft, lie, or deceive by His name, but call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks." The neglect of prayer stands upon the same level with cursing and swearing; and those who neglect daily prayer should think of it, when they are shocked at the profanity of wicked men, as every Christian ought to be, that they are in the same condemnation. For one who curses and swears breaks the second commandment, and the Lord will not hold him guiltless; and one who does not call upon God in times of need, and does not worship him with prayer, praise and thanksgiving, breaks the second commandment also, and the Lord will not hold Him guiltless either. Surely no one will deny that where Christianity has once exerted its influence the will of God, thus clearly expressed, will be regarded; and those who do disregard it, although they may refrain from many a vice, so far as its external manifestation is concerned, have not the Spirit of Christ and are none of His.

2. *The Christian prays because it is a precious privilege.* Prayer does not cease to be a duty when we have become Christians: but the Christian does not so much attend to it because it is commanded as because he desires it. Not because he must, but because he chooses, does he worship God with prayer, praise and thanksgiving. It does not thus cease to be considered a duty; for so far as Christians still retain the flesh, which lusts against the Spirit, they need legal training. They need urging on to discharge as a duty what they ought to be prompted to from within. Those who attend to their high Christian privileges only when they have inclinations to do so, will probably, in course of time, lose all inclination. All of us are beset by sin, and often need self-mortification in order to yield to the Spirit's guidance. Nor should we say that

what is not done cheerfully is not rightly done at any rate, and might as well be left undone. There is truth in it that it is not rightly done. All duties should be performed cheerfully, and in God's sight they are not performed aright when performed only by legal constraint. But if we leave them all undone until we can do them all with the proper degree of devotion, that is, without the weakness of the flesh, we will never do them at all. What the flesh refuses to do, we do in obedience to the Spirit's promptings until the flesh, by compulsion, is subdued and put under our feet. Thus we should perform what we know to be our duty because the Lord wills it, though our natural inclinations are to leave it undone or to do the reverse. "The Spirit is willing but the flesh is weak" was spoken of Christians in the beginning, and must be said of them now. But the Spirit, in Christians, is always willing; and to neglect duty because the flesh is weak or unwilling, is to yield to the flesh and resist the Spirit; whereas to do it in spite of the flesh's opposition is to yield to the Spirit and resist the flesh.

Prayer is always acknowledged by Christians to be a duty, so that, even when our natural lethargy in holy things rises up as an obstacle in the way of its faithful performance, the duty is performed because it is God's holy will. But this it would not and could not be if there were nothing but the legal demand to urge to its performance. In the Christian there is something more, something better, something stronger. In no case does he do it only because he must; he does it because he chooses, and the flesh, with its dullness and heaviness and unwillingness, yields in its opposition because it must yield to the superior power of the Spirit. So the Christian prays because he is permitted to do it and has the will to do it. "At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father Himself loveth

you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God." That is, ye will have access to the throne of grace yourselves, being accepted in the Beloved. The Spirit should be given them after our Lord's ascension, by whose enlightening influence they should ask in Jesus' name as they had not asked before, when many things were yet done before their eyes. Then the Savior would not ask that the Spirit should be given them to enlighten them, for they would be in possession of that Spirit to lead them into all truth.

Our Lord does not mean to say that He would cease to intercede for them, so that they might have the constant guidance and blessing of the Holy Spirit. He does always intercede for the sheep of His pasture. This is so plainly taught us that our hope of His blessed intercession stands upon the infallible rock of His Word. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Rom. 8, 34. "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." Heb. 7, 25. "My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not. And if any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." 1 John 2, 1. Jesus, our Brother, always pleads for us: of this assurance His words in our text are by no means intended to deprive us. But we are not cut off ourselves: we too are permitted to plead through faith in His name. This is also clearly taught us. In Christ Jesus our Lord "we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him." Eph. 3, 12. "For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities: but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find

grace to help in time of need." Heb. 4, 15–16. What a blessed privilege! We can enter the sanctuary ourselves, each one of us being through faith a king and priest unto God; and because we have this privilege we use it, and would not expose ourselves to the danger of losing it by neglecting to use it. How could we be conscious of having access to the King of all with our petitions, and yet never make our requests known unto Him? God speaks to us in His Word—we speak to Him in our prayer; and what loving child would forego the delightful privilege of speaking with his Father, or, having the privilege, would forego the use of it? Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace!

3. *The Christian prays because it is a condition of receiving great blessings.* "Ask," says our Savior, "and it shall be given unto you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." Matt. 7, 7. 8. This is a promise oft repeated; directly or indirectly it is contained on every page of God's revelation to man. "The Lord is far from the wicked; but He heareth the prayer of the righteous." Prov. 15, 29. "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Matt. 21, 22. "The effectual, fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain! and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." James 5, 16–18. And just as we have promises that our prayers shall be heard and the things which we ask in faith shall be given us, we have the warning also in the Scriptures that by neglecting to ask we miss many a blessing. "Ye lust and have not: ye kill and desire to have and cannot

obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask and receive not because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." James 2, 2. 3. Thus the believing petition is manifestly made a condition of receiving blessings.

But here a number of objections may occur, as they have often been started to shake the Christian's faith in the efficacy of prayer. In regard to them all it may be replied, that when God gives His child a promise, the child will have reason enough to cling to it unwaveringly, in spite of all that man may say, and in spite of every difficulty that Satan may suggest, because with God nothing is impossible. And yet it is well to show that all objections are futile, even apart from this, when viewed in the light which revelation gives.

Thus it is said, that God gives temporal gifts also to those who do not ask. That is true; but those who do not ask, still do not receive the same blessing as the prayerful believer. He receives gifts indeed; but by his unbelief they are often rendered curses, though God mercifully meant them as blessings. Gold and silver, health and honor, they may have; but gold and silver and honor, and all that man may have on earth, are of little worth without a cheerful heart, without a contented mind. Happiness is in the soul, not in the goods around us; and blessed in his possessions we can call no man, who is in perpetual dread of crosses and losses, who is, through fear of death, all his lifetime subject to bondage, and who has no hope of treasures when the present fade. All earthly goods are actual blessings only when we enjoy them in humble submission to the will of Him who holds all things in His hands, and whose gifts are humbly asked and gratefully received. When this is done all things are blessings, because all things work together for good.

'Thy way, not mine, O Lord,
However dark it be;
O lead me by Thine own right hand,
Choose out the path for me!
Smooth let it be or rough,
It will be still the best;
Winding or straight, it matters not,
It leads me to Thy rest."

When this is not done, nothing is enjoyed as a blessing, however great in itself, because nothing satisfies the aching heart. "All things are full of labor; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing." Ecc. 1, 8. And again, the Lord grants many an earthly gift in answer to our petitions for daily bread, which would not be bestowed if prayer were neglected. The Christian can say with perfect confidence: "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want," Ps. 23, 1, because he can ask in faith for the necessaries of this life.

Again it is objected, that God must change the course of His providence in order to hear every individual's prayer, for His order is fixed from eternity. What a want of knowledge of God and His ways such an objection betrays! Why, just the reverse is true: God would have to change His plans if the prayers of saints were not to be heard. With Him there is no variableness neither shadow of turning; and what He promised in time, that was determined from eternity. God designed from the beginning to hear our prayers; and He knew from the beginning what every believer's prayer would be, and so ordered His government that their request would be granted and that all would work for good to them. Therefore Christians pray on, undisturbed by erring reason's sophistries, even as Christians in all times cast their cares upon God, making their requests known

unto Him, that their joy might be full. As it is said of the first Christians, that "they continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in the breaking of bread and in prayers," Acts 2, 42, so it must be said of Christians in all ages; for the Holy Spirit moves them to pray without ceasing.

II. How does the Christian pray? The answer to this is implied in the very name of Christian, and is given in our text in the expressions, to "ask in Jesus' name," and, "because ye have believed that I came forth from God."

1. The Christian prays in Jesus' name. This implies praying in reliance upon His merits and His promises. Prayer is heard in no other name. Apart from Christ we have no access to the Father, because "the wrath of God abideth on us," and have therefore not the blessed privilege nor the cheering promise which Christians claim as their own. We are reconciled in Christ, and in Him only. Damnation is our due, and the curse cannot be removed without atonement. It must be borne. Jesus has borne it for us; but if we will not acknowledge Him as our Savior and Lord, His bearing the curse avails not for us. Of course no prayer can be heard then. There is an account to settle first. God is angry with the wicked every day, and nothing can remove His wrath but the atonement through Jesus' blood. To ask Him apart from Jesus is as though a child, who had disobeyed his parents' commands and exposed himself to severe punishment, should ask a reward for his disobedience.

Men are very slow to learn this, I know. The Gospel is to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness. It seems foolishness to many who call themselves Christians. When we tell them that prayers not offered in Jesus' name, prayers which do not even use the name, much less rely upon the merits of Christ for accept-

ance, are so far from being acceptable that they are grievously sinful, they decry us as narrow-minded bigots. When we tell them that they must not, while they profess to seek salvation in no other name but Christ's, be unequally yoked together with unbelievers, that they must not trample on Jesus' blood and make a mockery of Christian truth by playing the blasphemous farce of praying to God merely in their own name, or in the name of sin-cursed humanity, they are ever ready to tell us that we should confine ourselves to our own immediate duties and leave others unmolested; just as though a Christian's chief duty were not to stand up for Jesus, teaching every man, warning every man, with all long-suffering and doctrine.

Brethren, be not weary of confessing Christ and insisting that there is salvation in none other, and of course that prayers can be heard in no other name. We should always acknowledge our sin, and acknowledging this be afraid to approach our God, against whom we have sinned, except in the only name by which the sinful soul can find acceptance. We are accepted in the Beloved. Let us heed the warning, never proudly to rely upon our own strength or our own merit, since we have none to rely on. We must be rejected unless the all-prevailing name protect us and gain access for us. But let us also embrace the comfort which the text affords. We are very sinful and utterly worthless in ourselves; but since Jesus died for us, all our fears must be banished, and we can come with boldness to the throne of grace, seeing we come in the name of Him, who is the Beloved Son in whom God is well-pleased.

2. Therefore the Christian prays in faith. The promises of God are all certain. There is nothing, when he comes in reliance upon Jesus' name, that could give the Christian any reason to doubt that he inherits the

promise. The obstacle of sin is removed, since he is cleansed by Jesus' blood. All his iniquities are atoned for. The hand-writing which was against him is removed. As the Only Begotten is beloved, so they who trust in His merits are beloved also. "The Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God." Faith is necessary. This is implied in the coming in the name of Jesus; that is, in reliance upon Him alone. Hence faith is expressly made a condition of the hearing of prayer. "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, *believing*, ye shall receive." "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." James 1, 5–7. Without this we have no reason to expect the hearing of prayer; and the complaint which is sometimes made, that experience proves prayers to be frequently inefficacious, should rather be turned into a complaint that prayers are so frequently faithless. To be heard and answered prayers must be made in faith. "Whatsoever ye ask, believing, ye shall receive." A believing prayer will not be offered otherwise than in Jesus' name and according to the divine will. "This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us." 1 John 8, 14. When a person asks for the wealth or pomp or pleasures of earth, his prayer will not be granted, for the simple reason that no such prayer can result from faith. For faith must have a divine promise to rest upon; and the only temporal things which have a divine promise are the necessaries and comforts of life embraced in "our daily bread." It is men's ignorance of faith that makes the

promises with regard to prayer seem to them often so absurd; for if men pray with the expectation of having all their fancies granted, they simply confound human fancy with faith, which is of course faith in the divine Word. Whatsoever we ask according to the promise of God we ask in faith: nothing else can be asked believing. But this promise the Christian believes and he asks with confidence, knowing that the promise will not and cannot deceive him.

3. The Christian's faith trusts in the ordinary means. Prayer is not a means of grace. Means of grace are divine appointments through which God uniformly offers blessings to all who use them. Faith is the means by which the blessings are received and appropriated. God gives us bread, when we ask it, not through the channel of prayer, but through the ordinary channels of His providence. He gives us grace when we ask it, not through prayer, but through the ordinary means appointed for this end, namely the Word and Sacraments. He who despises these will as little have grace as he who refuses to accept bread produced in the ordinary way of nature. Faith asks with confidence, and trusts in the ordinary means of God's appointment for the blessings asked.

Dear brethren, it is a great and glorious right which we possess as the children of God to ask our Father for all that is needed on earth and all that is requisite for our happiness beyond this life on earth, and to ask with the full assurance of faith that He will grant our petition and crown us with blessings. This privilege many do not appreciate, and therefore they do not exercise it. Such persons should think of the divine command, which requires us to pray as a duty of worship. But they ought especially to give earnest attention to the truth which God reveals to us in His holy Word for our salvation, that their souls may by the Holy Spirit be taught to realize its

worth, and be moved to pray earnestly for the promised blessings. We are weak, but God is mighty; we are helpless, but He is a very present help. Call upon Him; He puts omnipotence at your service. Come in the name of His dear Son, believing His gracious promises, and whatsoever ye ask ye shall receive. We have so little because we pray so little; let us pray more and pray more fervently, that we may have more grace and blessing, and accomplish more for the glory of the blessed Savior. Lord, teach us to pray; Lord, increase our faith. Amen.

Ascension.

MARK 16, 14–20.

Afterward He appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen. And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe: in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.

Dear Brethren:

The Savior of the world was crucified; but on the third day He rose from the dead, and showed that the stupendous work of redemption was finished. The witnesses of His resurrection spread the glad tidings, but their testimony many were unwilling to accept. "Afterward He appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen." The words are remarkable. They show us not only how the things which belong to our peace are so apt to be treated as idle tales, but also that the source of all unbelief is in the wicked heart, not merely in the understanding. Here was the testimony of eye-witnesses, and yet it was not accepted; it was refused, not because the witnesses were not creditable, but because the hearts were hard and would not credit the testimony.

We wonder at this. But have we fully believed the testimony, borne not only by the women who went to the sepulchre, but also of the Holy Ghost speaking through inspired men? We too are upbraided for our unbelief and hardness of heart, and should take the reproof home to ourselves. He is risen indeed. The fact is beyond question, and happy are they who heartily believe the truth and triumph in the victory. And now the risen Lord gives commandment that the good tidings of His marvelous work for man's salvation be proclaimed to all the world. Then comes the final scene of His going to the Father. "So then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven and sat on the right hand of God." This is the subject that challenges our attention to-day. Let us devoutly consider

THE ASCENSION OF JESUS,

that we may derive that instruction and comfort from it which I. *Its Import*, and II. *Its Lessons* are calculated to give.

I. Our Lord was received into heaven and sat on the right hand of God. That means that the Son of Mary was exalted on high, and now reigns over all and intercedes for His kingdom.

1. It means that He is exalted in the heavenly places above all names and powers in heaven above or on earth beneath. God raised Him from the dead. St. Paul says, "and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." Eph. 1. 20–23. The Lamb

that was slain now enters into His glory. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle." Ps. 24, 7. 8. His right arm hath gotten Him the victory over every foe, and now He is exalted high, and reigns and triumphs in the heavens.

It is true that Christ is God over all, blessed forever. We would not sing triumphant songs of victory to-day if it were not so. Only God could overcome Satan, who seeks our destruction. The Word, who was God and by whom all things were created, was made flesh and dwelt among us. But how could He, who from eternity was over all, be exalted? Can God be lifted up any higher than He is and become any greater than He is? Of course not. That is not what the ascension and session at the right hand of God means. Our Lord was true God and is true God. He never ceased to be that. Even when He was persecuted and maltreated on earth, even when they spit upon Him and nailed Him to the cross, He was the mighty Monarch of the universe. Never for a day or an hour did He cease to be God or yield His divine prerogatives. He continued to rule in the heavens even when He was a helpless Babe in the manger: He continued to reign over all things on earth even when He was delivered for our offences into the hands of His foes. The Son of God, the second person of the glorious Trinity, may be exalted in our hearts: we may learn to know Him better and love Him more, and thus assign Him a higher place in our thoughts and affections: but in Himself He can not be exalted. He has been infinite in His glory and majesty from eternity, and no power could humble Him or exalt Him.

Nor did He even in His assumed human nature receive any accession to the majesty of His being by His

ascension into heaven. It was before this that He said: "All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth." Matt. 28, 18. Evidently He refers to His human nature, for as the Son of God He had all power from eternity. When the Word was made flesh, the humanity was taken into the unity of His person and shared the power which that person possessed before the foundation of the world. The holy child Jesus, who was born of the Virgin Mary, was the eternal Son of God. He was the same person of whom it is said: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." John 1, 1–3. When the fulness of time was come He was made of a woman, and to the human nature which He assumed was given the power which the Son of God who was thus manifest in the flesh, always had. It was not then by His ascension, but by His incarnation that the human nature of our Lord was made partaker of the divine attributes.

And yet He was exalted; for St. Paul says expressly, "Wherefore God hath also highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name." Phil. 4, 9. How this is meant the preceding words show. "Being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." As a man He was in possession of all power in heaven and on earth, because His human nature was united with the divine in the one undivided person of the Son of God. But He came to save mankind by obedience unto death, and therefore chose not to make constant use of the power and majesty which was committed to Him in His human nature. Sometimes He manifested forth His glory, as when He wrought miracles or when He was transfigured before His disciples; but ordinarily He appeared like

other men, humbling Himself even to the suffering of an ignominious death. But that was only for a while, that the work of redemption might be accomplished through shame and suffering. After that work was finished He entered upon the full exercise of His divine power, and the man Christ Jesus triumphed over hell, rose again from the dead, and ascended into heaven, now no more humbling Himself, but exalted to the right hand of the Father in infinite majesty.

For that is what sitting at the right hand of God means. In the right hand is strength; at the right hand is the place of honor. To sit at the right hand of God therefore signifies to share His power and His glory. Hence our Lord says: "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Matt. 26, 64. And hence it is written: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds, who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, being made so much better than the angels as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." Heb. 1, 1–4. We should not permit our thoughts of earthly and material things to dim our vision of things which are heavenly and spiritual. Our Lord has not gone to a place of local confinement, but far above all heavens, to rule and reign in infinite power and glory; as it is written, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at my right hand until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." Psalm 110, 1. And the apostle has said expressly, God raised Jesus from the dead "and set Him at His own right hand

in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, and hath put all things under His feet." Eph. 1, 20–22. Verily, our Lord was not placed under local limitations when He sat down at the right hand of God, which is everywhere because God is everywhere, but was crowned with glory and honor, and entered upon the unlimited exercise, also in His humanity, of that power which was given to Him when He was conceived in the virgin's womb, but which was kept in abeyance for a while that He might suffer for our sins.

In such royal exaltation our Savior reigns over all things, putting all enemies under His feet and governing all things for the welfare of His kingdom. He has all power in His hands and exercises it, so that the gates of hell shall not prevail against His Church, and His people have nothing to fear. "Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder and cast their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision." Ps. 2, 1–4. But while He puts all enemies under His feet by His almighty power, so that they shall not harm them who put their trust in Him, He rules His people in love and leads them gently in green pastures and beside the still waters, as the royal Shepherd of His flock. To that end He gave His Word and Sacraments, by which He would be ever present among them for their peace and comfort and joy, and ever increase the number of them that shall be saved through the precious blood which He shed for them. Our Lord is exalted King, and reigns and triumphs at God's right hand: own

your gracious Lord, and in your hearts crown Him Lord of all!

2. He who has ascended on high to rule over all things still carries on His priestly work and pleads for His people. "Who is He that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Rom. 8, 34. The atonement is made. The Great High-priest has offered the infinite sacrifice for the sins of the world. As a Lamb without blemish He offered Himself upon the altar of the cross to expiate human sin. The redemption is accomplished: "it is finished." There is no more sacrifice to be made for the sins of the world. All that divine righteousness required is done. And yet He has not ceased to be our Great High-priest and to exercise His priestly office. "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the high-priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." Heb. 9, 24–26. Once for all the ransom was offered; but its effect is for all time; and therefore the Great High-priest, while He is exalted King over all, still points to the merits of His blood and pleads for those whom He purchased, that the Father may have mercy and their faith may not fail. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." 1 John 2, 1. At the right hand of the Father He continues to intercede for us, that grace may be ministered to us and the end of our faith, which is the saving of the soul, may be attained.

Jesus has been exalted to the right hand of the

Majesty on high, there to reign and there to intercede on behalf of the purchase of His blood. This is the blessed import of His ascension into heaven.

II. But this brings to us a lesson that we have the utmost need to learn. It impresses upon us the necessity of faith in His name, that we may have the consolation of His work on earth and of His promise of a home in heaven, where He has gone to prepare a place for us. It shows us the great need for work in His kingdom by using the appointed means for its maintenance and extension, that His saving will may be done on earth and souls may be brought to Him in the blessedness of heaven. It shows, finally, how needful it is that those who love the Lord should set their affections on things above, where their blessed Lord has gone before them, and as pilgrims and strangers on the earth to have their conversation in heaven. May the Holy Spirit enable us to learn the lesson!

1. Our Redeemer's work of salvation on earth is done, and He has gone to the Father that all may be in readiness for our reception when life's journey is ended and we are called away from earth. Is that all an idle tale to our ears and hearts, or is it earnest and solacing reality? Our Lord upbraided His disciples with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen: has He not reason to upbraid us, that we make so little account of the glorious work of our redemption, and of the cheering fact that He is waiting to receive us in the abode of bliss and doing all that can be done on His part to bring us thither? "Let not your heart be troubled," He tells us; "ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also." John 14, 1–3. He has gone to the Father and

reigns over all. He has gone to the Father and intercedes for them whom He has redeemed. He has come to us and abides with us through His Word and Sacrament, that we may be fitted for the place which He has prepared for us and be ever with the Lord. Do you believe it all? Then why is your heart so troubled? Then why is there so little of joy in the blissful prospect and so little of the patience of hope in the cross to be borne on the way to the crown? Do you believe it all? Then why is there such trembling because of the enemy whom He has put under His feet, and such doubt of the soul's final attainment of everlasting happiness in our Father's house? O brethren, the good tidings which the Holy Spirit proclaims by the inspired Word are not cunningly devised fables. They are the very truth of God, which stands firm when heaven and earth passes away. The suffering Savior has fulfilled His mission on earth and redeemed our fallen race; and now that the work is done and the agony past He has ascended on high and given gifts to men as the King of glory, who has all power in His hands and exercises it for man's salvation. He proclaims the good tidings to you that you may believe and be glad and give Him glory forever. Do you believe it? Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief!

2. Those who believe do His bidding and become workers together with their exalted Lord in His kingdom. He rules in the Church by His Word and Sacraments, and through these means extends His kingdom and grants eternal salvation to His subjects. "He said unto them, Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Salvation is brought to souls condemned. But it is not in your power or in mine to rescue from death. We have not made the atonement; that was the work of our Lord.

We have no saving power in ourselves, and can put none into our words or ordinances; that too is the work of our Lord. Accordingly He says: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth; go ye therefore and teach all nations," and adds, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." It is the Lord that has secured the salvation by His obedience unto death and fulfilment of all righteousness in our stead, and it is the Lord that turns sinful souls to the blissful truth and works faith in them to believe it. He employs the means of grace to effect this glorious end, and therefore these means are so powerful and perform such wonderful things. He uses them to accomplish His gracious will. The heart that believes this finds no difficulty in accounting for their efficacy or trusting in their power, while benighted reason, that sees in them only human words and human ordinances, can of course find no spiritual life in them to regenerate and save. It is the Lord that doeth marvelous things by His Gospel. But He commands His disciples, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature;" and it is recorded of them that "they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word with signs following." Those who believe in the mighty and merciful Savior, moved by the Spirit of God who enables them to realize the importance of the work to be done in the Redeemer's name and by the Redeemer's power, apply the means of grace that their exalted Master's gracious will may be done, and that souls, otherwise inevitably and eternally lost, may be brought into His kingdom and preserved in it unto eternal life in the many mansions where He has prepared a place for them.

Have you, dear brethren, realized the infinite import of this glorious work for our condemned race, and heeded your exalted Master's command to execute it in His name?

Have you done what you could, if you have not been able or are not able now to devote yourself to the ministry as a regular calling, to establish the church in your community and sustain a pastor who shall preach the Gospel in your stead? No one is exempt from the command and the duty: if you own your Lord, confess His name and preach the good tidings of salvation or have them preached. Some men can go themselves and preach the Gospel, some, having other needful temporal callings for which their talents are better fitted, can furnish money to maintain those that go. Have you done what you could in this regard, gathering and feeding the Lord's sheep because you love the Lord? Have you labored and prayed and contributed that men may be educated for the work and sent out as laborers into the harvest which is so plenteous? Let us examine ourselves in regard to these things, and repent, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance. God has committed to us the means for saving the world, and Himself does the saving work through them: will you not apply them more faithfully for your dear Lord's sake and for the sake of the precious souls whom He purchased with His blood and now would purify through the Gospel?

And that Lord who works in the hearts of men by His Word and Sacrament, as King over all, employs all instrumentalities needed to win men's attention to the Gospel and induce them to hear it. For He tells us, "These signs shall follow them that believe: in my name shall they cast out devils: they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them: they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." And when the disciples went out, according to the command, to preach the Gospel, the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word with signs following. All was fulfilled as the Savior promised it. And the same Lord still reigns

and retains all power, and still He employs it, according to His wisdom and mercy, as circumstances require, to accomplish the gracious purpose of man's salvation. True, we do not see now the array of miracles which distinguished the days of the apostles. But when the beginnings were made of the Christian Church there was a need for such marvels that does not exist now. Men were to be drawn to the Word by natural powers, that through it the supernatural power which alone can save might be exerted. But now there is that standing miracle of the conquests made by the Church of Christ which no thinking man can ignore, and as that one miracle stands out before the eyes of the world, minor signs are not now necessary as they once were to confirm the Word and draw attention to its claims. What is needed for this, our Lord will be sure to do. Only see to it, dear brethren, that the Gospel is preached: the Lord who gave it will not fail to confirm it with signs following, while it will bring salvation to lost men.

3. One more lesson which our Savior's ascension teaches we must mention. It is that which St. Paul impresses upon us when He says: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." Col. 3, 1. 2. When we have learned to know our Savior, who passed through sufferings to glory, and believe and are assured that He has redeemed us and prepared a place for us where the cross of earth shall be exchanged for the crown of heaven, this land of our pilgrimage will not be regarded as our home. That is in a better place, where sin and sorrow never come. We are but strangers and pilgrims on earth. Our Lord, whom we love and with whom we would ever be, is gone to the heavenly mansions, though He does not leave us nor forsake us while we sojourn

here. Thus, where Jesus is, we would be also. Can we sincerely believe that He is gone to the Father's house and is exalted at His right hand in the heavenly glory, without lifting our souls to those higher regions of bliss and having our conversation there? How can we set our affections on things below, as if these were our dearest and lasting treasures, if our dearest treasure is really in heaven? Can we love our Savior aright and truly believe His blessed promises, if our thoughts and affections all center on earthly things and only occasionally, perhaps never, rise above them? Your Lord has gone to prepare a place for you; that is to be your permanent home; if you believe it, must not your thoughts and affections find the highest attraction there? Resist the flesh, which pulls you down to the earthly and entangles you in its cares and pleasures, and look up to heaven and rejoice in the hope of glory with your Savior in your Father's house.

Meantime, while we sojourn here on earth as strangers and pilgrims, let us seek earnestly and patiently and perseveringly to do our gracious Master's will, and work with our might, in the strength of His might, to make His unsearchable riches known to all nations, and to serve Him for His glory and for the good of our fellow men; and praising and magnifying our ascended Lord, rejoice that we are heirs of heaven and shall behold Him in His glory. Amen.

Sixth Sunday after Easter — Exaudi.

JOHN 15, 26–16, 4.

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of me: and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning. These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.

Dear Brethren:

It was expedient for us that Jesus should go to the Father. He went into death, and through death into glory, that we might have life and salvation. He has fulfilled His redeeming work on earth and gone to prepare a place for us in heaven. There He intercedes for us at the Father's throne, that where He is we may be also when our trials are over and our work is done. But thence too He sends us the Holy Spirit to prepare us for the mansions in our Father's house by enabling us to cling in faith to Him who is "the way and the truth and the life." "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of me." On that testimony, as it is given to us in Holy Scripture, our assurance and comfort depends. Into that as the truth in Jesus unto salvation He guides us, that we may have light and life, pardon and peace. But when He has wrought

faith in our souls He prompts us also to testify of Him in whom is all our hope. "Ye also shall bear witness." Let us to-day meditate on the privilege and duty of

WITNESSING FOR JESUS.

1. Our text points out, in the first place, who are called to bear witness.

Jesus addresses those whom He had chosen to be His apostles, and in an eminent sense these are His witnesses. "Ye also shall bear witness because ye have been with me from the beginning." They had opportunities and facilities for knowing the truth which are not accorded to all men. Living with Jesus and enjoying His intercourse for years, they heard His words and saw His works day after day, and could testify of things which came under the observation of their own senses. Hence when an apostle was to be chosen in the place of Judas, who "by transgression fell, that he might go to his place," St. Peter said: "Of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John unto that same day that He was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of His resurrection." Acts 1, 21. 22. Again the same apostle says of our Savior: "We are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day and showed Him openly, not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead." Acts 10, 39-41. And St. John writes: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled of the Word of life; (for the life was manifested,

and we have seen it and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us;) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us." 1 John 1, 1–3. In His good providence God left nothing undone that could serve to convince mankind of the truth, on the reception of which their eternal happiness depends. No history is better authenticated, even so far as human evidence is concerned, than that of Jesus. We have the unimpeachable testimony of eye-witnesses to the facts recorded in the gospel narrative, and where that testimony is rejected it is not because the evidence is insufficient, but because the heart is not right.

Not only by their own observation of the facts recorded, however, were the apostles peculiarly qualified to be witnesses of the truth in Jesus. More than that is claimed. Even eye-witnesses may be deceived, and error is therefore possible so far as men depend on their natural sources of information. But the apostles and evangelists were unerring witnesses of the truth. The record which is made in the Scriptures of the Gospel of Christ is the work of the Holy Spirit, who cannot be deceived and cannot deceive. The testimony which they bear has all the authority which human evidence can have, and much more. It is divine. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," says St. Peter. 2 Pet. 1, 21. And St. Paul writes: "Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." 2 Tim.

3, 14–17. The Holy Spirit testifies through these inspired men, and they are witnesses whose testimony only blind unbelief and hardness of heart can reject. To that testimony ye do well to take heed, for ever increasing enlightenment and for daily replenishment of strength and comfort.

But the word applies to us also, though not in the same eminent sense: "Ye also shall bear witness." Every child of God is a witness of the Father's love. Every believer in Jesus can bear testimony to the grace which has brought him consolation and peace. We are not inspired men and women, and we may err. But there are some things of which the Holy Spirit, who guides believers into all truth, has made us certain. Our Lord has assured us, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8, 31. 32. We know that we were blind, and that we now see; we know that we were without God and without hope in the world, and that we now rejoice in the hope of glory; we know that sin rendered us restless in the prospect of an account to be rendered, and that we now have peace in believing. The witness of the Spirit has made us witnesses and enabled us to tell to others what a dear Savior we have found. And such witness we are required to bear, as the Spirit of God moving us renders it a privilege to bear it. No one can be an intelligent and earnest believer without being such a witness of the truth that sanctifies and saves. For the holy man moved by the Holy Ghost says: "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth

confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed." Rom. 10, 8–11. No one can be led to an earnest faith in the Lord Jesus as his Savior from sin and death without experiencing an impulse to tell others of the treasure he has found, and that Savior says Himself, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels." Luke 9, 26. Faith makes men martyrs, that is, witnesses even unto the sacrifice of life for the sake of the truth which they testify, and the noble army of martyrs which the Christian Church presents, evinces what unflinching witnesses sincere Christians become by the power of God in faith. Ye too are witnesses, my brethren. Or has the Spirit of God made no truth sure and precious to your souls, so that you can testify in its behalf, and has the grace of God ministered no peace and comfort to your hearts, so that you can bear testimony that these things are so? Surely ye too are witnesses; let not your testimony be withheld or suppressed.

2. That of which we are witnesses is the truth unto salvation in Christ. The Holy Spirit shall testify of Jesus, and of Him ye too shall testify.

The great facts on which the salvation of man rests are witnessed by the apostles on the ground of their own observation. How He lived and loved and labored, how He suffered and died and rose again they saw, and they could testify of the things which they had seen. But it was the Holy Ghost that led them into the truth. He made known to them the import of the lowly birth and ignominious death and glorious resurrection and ascension of the Son of the Virgin who was the Son of God. That Jesus was crucified they could see, that He rose again on the third day they could see, and to these things they

could bear witness from their own personal knowledge as furnished by their own senses. But that He was the Eternal Son of the Father born of a woman to redeem lost souls, that He was God manifest in the flesh, that He was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification, they could not see with their natural eyes. Flesh and blood could not reveal this. The truth they could know only by revelation, whether given by Jesus Himself while He was with them, or by the Holy Spirit after Jesus had gone to the Father. But the truth was made known to them, and they bore witness that Jesus is the Son of God, the promised Messiah, the Savior of the world, and that there is salvation in none other. They testify of Jesus, that He is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, and that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

Through the testimony of the Holy Spirit given in Holy Scripture we also become acquainted with the great facts of our Lord's life and death and resurrection and ascension, and of the great truth that it was all for our salvation; and the witness of the Spirit makes us witnesses also that Jesus is truly the Savior, in whom our troubled souls find peace. We have not seen the Lord with our bodily eyes, and have not beheld His pierced hands and bleeding side, nor heard His cry of anguish on the cross; we are not inspired and have not by an immediate revelation of His Spirit known that the blood shed on Calvary cleanseth us from all sin, and that they who believe in Him shall never see death. But we have known and believed the love which God hath to us, and are blessed in believing though we have not seen. We have known that he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world. Has not God in His mercy come to us by the faithful Word, which is yea and amen forever, so that our hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love and unto all riches

of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God and of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge? Col. 2, 2. Has He not by His Holy Spirit wrought effectually in our hearts that we might give thanks unto the Father, "who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son, in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins?" Col. 1, 12–14. And having known these things from the Holy Scriptures and being assured of them for our own comfort and peace, should we not for the glory of our Savior and the salvation of our fellow men testify of them? We too are witnesses of the glorious things which are spoken in the Gospel, and it is meet that we should bear our testimony and help to make the unsearchable riches of Christ known to all nations. The Spirit of truth testifies of Jesus, "and ye also shall bear witness" of Him.

3. How this testimony is to be borne is not specified in the words of our text, but is clearly enough implied, and is distinctly pointed out for our guidance in other passages. The consequences of such testifying are mentioned, and they show that it is of such a nature as to provoke opposition in the world, and must therefore be public and persistent in word and work.

Salvation is a matter of the heart. Christ redeemed us all by His obedience unto death, but the fruits of that redemption are ours only when they are appropriated by faith. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." "The kingdom of God is within you." It is therefore not an error to think that the work of the Holy Ghost in our souls is of paramount importance. That is the chief thing; the external work, which is a manifestation of the internal life, is secondary. But it is an error

to assume that what is second in order is therefore needless. "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." Gal. 5, 25. Faith alone saves, but "faith without works is dead," and a dead faith does not save. External forms, whether in words or deeds, which lack the internal life are mere shams. They avail us nothing. But the internal life must find an adequate expression in words and deeds, and these then will be no hypocritical pretences, but earnest fruits of the Spirit which glorify the Lord. When such fruits are wanting there is reason to fear that the life is wanting. It is therefore a grave mistake to treat all outward actions as indifferent, and to imagine that all the purposes of Christianity are attained when faith is wrought in the soul. That is not witnessing for Jesus. Even if inwardly the glory of our salvation were given to Him, that would not be bearing our testimony to the truth in Him for the benefit of our fellow men. As with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, so with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Particular stress is laid upon such witnessing in words, because it is both the most effective and the most practicable form which our testimony can assume. Language is the proper medium for the communication of truth. When we want another to understand us clearly and fully, we do not depend on gestures or motions, but clothe our thought in words. Actions speak also, and because they often require more effort than speech, they are in many cases better evidences of sincerity. But words are needful for an adequate communication of truth. If we would tell what we know of Jesus and His grace and peace, we must put it into words. With the mouth confession is made. And that is the most practicable as well as the most effective way to testify. Our actions but too often fail to set forth our convictions and desires. They come short of the Christian's purposes, because the sin that is

in him contaminates them and obstructs them. Often he must complain that what he would he does not. But he can at least say what he means and what he would. That is always practicable. And there is no excuse if he fails to do this. The importance of the truth for his fellow men as well as for the honor of his Savior must move him to confess the Lord Jesus before men and testify to the grace and truth which come by Him.

Such testimony cannot be adequately given without joining with other Christians in the Church and providing for the regular preaching of the Gospel and administration of the sacraments, and for the stated public worship of God. Wherever the opportunity occurs our witness will be borne among men in our private relations and associations, but the witnessing for Jesus in words will be mainly through the offices and privileges of the Church. We are witnesses for Jesus when we make our confession of Him with our brethren in the public congregation, and that testimony is continued through the mouth of the minister by all who are members of the body that has called him for such service, and is renewed and repeated at every meeting for worship. Refusal to unite with the congregation is so far a refusal to be a witness for Jesus. Therefore the Word of God admonishes us: "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for He is faithful that promised; and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching." Heb. 10, 23–25. If you would be earnest witnesses for Jesus, confess the truth with His people and work together with them that the Gospel may be everywhere preached and the Savior everywhere praised.

But in the work of our daily life also we should be witnesses for Jesus. It is true, as has been before remarked,

that our actions will not be a clear and complete expression of what we know and believe and desire concerning Jesus. Imperfection attaches to them and sin taints them. But it is true also, as has been before remarked, that our actions are often more conclusive evidence of sincerity than our words. And they are not without effect upon the minds of people as testimony. They serve to call attention to the truth which we confess and to elicit further inquiry concerning its contents and claims. Therefore we are commanded to let our light shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify our Father that is in heaven. Matt. 5, 16. A holy life adorns the doctrine which we profess and commends it to others. The more our life is conformed to the pattern of Christ's, the more will the witness which we bear for Him in words challenge the notice of men. More could be done in this way for Christ and for man's salvation than we are doing. The worldliness of Christians is a great impediment to the progress of the Gospel. It is a failure to testify of Jesus; it is in fact a practical testimony of Christians against that which they profess to believe. For this reason, as well as for others, let us take the entreaty of the apostle to heart to-day: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Rom. 12, 1. 2.

4. The consequences of such witnessing for Jesus will not be such as the flesh desires. Our Lord says: "These things have I spoken unto you that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they

do unto you because they have not known the Father nor me. But these things have I told you that when the time shall come ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning because I was with you." While the Lord was yet visibly present with His disciples the storms of indignation would burst upon Him rather than upon them, and whatever of affliction would come upon them He was present to allay. It was therefore not necessary that the trials which should befall them as His witnesses should be mentioned at the beginning. But now they must be prepared for them, lest they should expect other things and be offended when troubles come. And come they must when faithful testimony is borne. What their Master told them came to pass. They testified of Jesus and were persecuted. Nearly all of the apostles not only suffered the loss of all things in this life and bore every manner of shame and pain, but sealed their testimony by the martyr's death. They bravely witnessed for Jesus and joyfully laid down their lives in confirmation of the truth which they proclaimed. And their testimony was not in vain. Their words and their works were blessed for the good of the souls for whom Christ died, and thousands were added to the church of them that should be saved.

We also are witnesses, and we too must expect that our witness will subject us to persecution. The truth which we testify is not palatable to the natural man, and the earnest Christian life is felt to be a rebuke to the carnal mind, whether it profess faith in Christ or openly renounce Him. We may be sure that we are not faithful witnesses for Jesus if the world is satisfied with the doctrine which we confess and the life which we lead. The truth in Jesus humbles man, and will be resented by those who know not the Father nor the Son; the life which humbly follows Jesus by renouncing the world and seek

ing those things which are above will be an offense to the carnal desire and worldly mind of those who are not of God and hear not His Word. Hence our Lord warned His disciples: "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you; for so did their fathers to the false prophets." Luke 6, 26. Accommodating the truth in Jesus to the reason and taste of carnal men is perverting it and robbing it of its power; accommodating the life to the ways of the world that lieth in wickedness is resisting the Spirit and serving the flesh. That will please men and win the praise of the thoughtless and careless, but it will not testify of Jesus and gain dying souls for Him. If you contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints and sincerely strive to walk worthy of Him of whom your words testify, you must expect the world's hostility. "In the world ye shall have tribulation," our Lord says; "but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." John 16, 33. The tribulations which must be endured on account of the testimony for Jesus will not harm us. We shall pass through the tribulations into the kingdom of God, and shall only be driven by them all the more to seek our help in Jesus and to prize the treasures which are in store for us when our journey is ended. Meantime the testimony which we bear shall be a power for the extension of our Lord's kingdom and its eternal blessings among men. The truth will find acceptance with some, and they, having believed it by the power of the Holy Ghost, shall join us in praising God and in witnessing for it and spreading it still further. Our labor shall not be in vain in the Lord, and our suffering, which is but for a little while, will result in permanent blessing. Therefore go on witnessing for Jesus, though persecutions come, that your Savior may be glorified and that souls may be converted to Him and eternally saved.

May our blessed Lord, who was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification, give us His Holy Spirit in large measure, that we may know and appreciate the truth and be bold and persistent witnesses of its power unto salvation, and to Him be glory for ever. Amen.

Pentecost.

JOHN 14, 23–31.

Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me. These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father; for my Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe. Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.

Beloved in the Lord:

We commemorate to-day the outpouring of the Holy Ghost upon the disciples of Jesus. The promise that had been given by the prophets and repeated by our Lord was now fulfilled. When, after His glorious ascension into heaven, the disciples were all with one accord in one place to celebrate the feast of Pentecost, "suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." To this event our text

refers as yet in the future, and it seems to have but little adaptation to the day which we celebrate. But a closer view will dispel such a thought. It does indeed assume that those of whom it speaks have already received the Holy Spirit and are already believers. How otherwise could they love the Lord and keep His words? But just because that is the work of the Spirit it is appropriate to consider it to-day. And more than that must be observed. The Holy Spirit's work does not cease when He has led souls to believe in Jesus and to love Him. It goes on through life. He is our Comforter in this hour, and is the guide and consolation of believers every day until their journey of life is ended and their goal is reached in glory. That work of the Spirit, applying to our hearts all that our Redeemer secured for us, is set forth in our text. He leads us to Jesus and keeps us in union with Him, and renders us blessed in His fellowship. Let us endeavor to realize the comfort of the Holy Ghost by considering

THE BLESSEDNESS OF THOSE THAT LOVE THE LORD.

I. Our Savior Himself tells us, "Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it." Luke 11, 28. Such blessedness only they who love Him enjoy; for He says in our text, "If a man love me he will keep my words," and "He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings." They are blessed whom the Spirit guides into the saving truth of the Gospel and through it rejoice in the Lord and seek the glory of His name.

1. They learn the word of the Lord, that the power of the Holy Spirit may be upon them. Prompted by the love of Jesus they search the Scriptures, which testify of Him and give them light and life. This Word they recognize as the very Word of God, which holy men spake

as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing," says St. Paul of the Christians at Thessalonica, "because, when ye received the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of man, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which effectually worketh in you that believe." 1 Thess. 2, 14. With godly reverence they hear that Word in the Church and read it in their homes. And the Holy Spirit who inspired it helps them to understand it and appreciate it. "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." That is true now as it was in the day when our Lord spoke it. What He spoke for our salvation is written by the Spirit for our learning, and those who love the Lord are glad to learn it and remember it and meditate on it, and the Holy Spirit blesses them in their deed

Or is it not so among us, my brethren? If it is not, the truth remains the same, though our course and condition are not commendable. The truth remains the same, that if a man love the Lord he will keep the Lord's words. But if we have no desire to learn the Word and make no effort to keep it, must it not be because we do not love the Lord? "He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings." If you take an interest in the business and pleasures of the world, but take no interest in the glorious things that are spoken in the Holy Scriptures, ask yourself the serious question which concerns you much, is it not because you do not love the Lord and have not yet learned to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness? Such a state is not blessed. The Holy Spirit desires to make it otherwise. Do not resist Him to-day, when He appeals to you in behalf of your own happiness

and entreats you to hear the Word of God and learn it. You never can do this without crucifying the flesh, which takes more interest in theaters than in churches, in money than in grace, in newspapers and novels than in the word of life; but "if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Rom. 8, 13. 14. If you have given way to the flesh, be thankful that God has given you room for repentance, and begin to-day—do not put it off until to-morrow—to read and learn the precious Word that testifies of Jesus, your Savior from sin and death.

2. And more than this is needful. Learning the Word is not all that is implied in keeping it. To keep it means not only to know it and remember it, but also to do it. "Be ye doers of the Word," says St. James, "and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the Word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." James 1, 22–25. The blessedness depends upon the operation of the Spirit through the Word. The law shows us our sin, that we may flee for forgiveness to Him who bore its curse in our stead and from His fullness receive grace to glorify the Lord by executing His holy will. Those who love the Lord have seen their sin and fled for refuge to the hope set before them in Jesus' blood shed for its remission. They keep the Word which promises them life and salvation through the sacrifice made for them upon the cross. They believe that Jesus is truly their Savior, and rejoice that He has

fulfilled all righteousness for them and paid the penalty of their sin, so that through Him they have an entrance into the kingdom of glory, unworthy as they are of any blessing. And when they have believed the promises and appropriated the blessings of our Lord's redemption, they keep the Word also which declares their Lord's will that we should live in righteousness and holiness all our days, doing zealously what He has commanded us to do and suffering patiently the trials and troubles through which we must pass in the accomplishment of His will.

Or is it, in this respect, otherwise with us? Do we reject the promises and despise the commandments of our Lord? Not that, I think. I hope that can not be said of us. But I fear that the love of Jesus does not move all to keep the Word as the Spirit would enable them. I am not your judge. I have only to impress upon your hearts the truth, declared by our Lord, your Lord and mine, "If a man love me, he will keep my words." Examine yourselves by the rule. See whether you know the Lord to be your mighty and your only Savior, whether you appreciate the stupendous sacrifice which He has made to save you, and whether you really love Him, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world. And if you have loved Him, see whether the expression of that love in confessing His name and doing His bidding has been such as your own conscience will commend. Your salvation does not depend upon an adequate service of the Redeemer. That would leave no room for hope in any of us. "For we have all sinned and come short of His glory." But does not your own heart tell you, if you love the Lord, that your trust in the Savior's merits and your labor of love and your patience of hope has not been such as would magnify your Savior's grace and properly set forth your heart's affection? The Spirit has not withdrawn His power. He is with you still. He speaks to you in this hour and pleads with you.

Will you not henceforth more adequately show that you love Him? The blessing is nigh you: do not neglect it or reject it. "Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it." Such blessedness have they that love the Lord.

II. But our Lord promises further blessing. If a man love the Lord he will keep the Lord's words, "and my Father will love him," He tells us, "and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." Let us inquire into the meaning of this and endeavor to realize its blessedness.

1. The words are themselves an explanation of a similar remark which Jesus had made before. "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them," He said, "he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him. Judas saith unto Him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us and not unto the world?" John 14, 21. 22. The reply is contained in the words of our text. Only those who love the Lord can understand His Word and appreciate its blessed contents. To them the Savior manifests Himself in His beauty. Them the Father loves as He loves the Son. To them the blessed Trinity comes and makes His abode in them for their comfort and peace and everlasting joy. They are unspeakably blessed; for what more can God do than to come to us and dwell in us!

Our reason is indeed ever ready to trouble us with questionings. How can these things be? How can we love the Lord unless He come to us first and give us other hearts than those sinful, unloving hearts which are ours by nature? Has not the Holy Spirit Himself taught us in the Word that "we love Him because He first loved us?" 1 John 4, 19. And so it must be, because we cannot know Jesus until He enlighten us and cannot love Him

until He quicken us. So the Scriptures certainly teach. But let us not make needless difficulties. God loved us first, else we never would have been drawn to Him and led to love Him. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John 4, 9. 10. He came to us; we never of ourselves could have come to Him. Without Him we can do nothing. But that does not imply that enemies and friends of our Lord all enjoy the same blessings, though He offered His precious life as a ransom for all. "God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Much more, then, being now justified, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." Rom. 5, 8–11. Those who have been brought to the Savior and who cling to Him by faith are now especially dear to Him as the sheep of His fold. They have become dear children of our heavenly Father, and He loves them as His own sons and daughters. He loved the world and sent His Son to save it; He gives His Spirit to draw men unto Him, and thus shows His love to all; but He does not stand in the same relation to those who reject His love as to those who are drawn by it to accept the pardon and peace and bliss which He offers. These He loves in a higher sense and blesses with further blessings — blessings which are indeed secured for all men, but of which those are incapable who reject the life and salvation which are in Jesus only. The Holy Spirit comes to man by the appointed means to work faith in the

hearers' hearts, that they may find rest in Him and love Him as their Savior and their Lord. If men do despite to that Spirit and persist in refusing the grace which He brings, the wrath of God abideth on them; if they are brought to believe in Jesus and to love Him, the Father will love them as His dear children, the Son will manifest Himself more and more to them in His supreme loveliness and grace, and the Holy Ghost will continue in their hearts to increase their light and strength and give constant comfort and joy. Then God not only comes to enlighten and convert with His grace from without through the Word and Sacrament, but comes to make His abode with them, supporting and strengthening the soul until all trials are past and glory is reached.

2. Such unspeakable blessings should arouse our interest. They are promised to those who love the Lord. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Rom. 8, 32. We are children of the living God, and heirs of all our Father's wealth. And He is not far off, leaving us to grope our way in the darkness and fight our battles with sin and sorrow unaided and alone. That would be leaving us comfortless. He is with us. Not only does He come to us when troubles are upon us and conflicts are to be endured; He is always at hand. He has come to make His abode with us, ruling all the creatures and events around us, and directing all within us. Have you realized this blessedness, and permitted Him to direct your hearts and minds? Seek to realize it more fully to-day, and let the Word abide in you more richly that you may realize it more fully in future days. "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." 1 John 3, 1. Let not your thoughts be absorbed by the transitory treasures of this world, great as they

may be for the little season of our earthly life, while the great blessedness which is yours is overlooked and unappreciated, and even in danger of being lost by your neglect. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." 1 Cor. 3, 16. 17. Brethren, let the indwelling Spirit prosecute His sanctifying work within you, and grieve Him not, and let the blessedness of God's indwelling be daily enjoyed.

III. Then the soul will have peace. That is a fruit of the Spirit in them that love the Lord. "Peace I leave with you," He tells us, "my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

1. The world knows something about peace, and such as it has it gives. Certainly there is enough in the world to disturb and trouble the soul, and it is natural that men should seek some remedy for the evil and some means to give the troubled spirit rest. Prudence has dictated a control of the passions, and various expedients have been devised to effect it. Philosophers have suggested methods to prevent disquiet and to restore ruffled minds to composure. But prudential measures and philosophical systems have come and gone, and tranquility never came or never remained. The world, indeed, has cared little for the world's philosophy, and has continued to seek peace in the gratification of feelings whose presence was the cause of disquiet. Some have chased the bubble of fame until they were weary, and found that it burst when they succeeded in seizing it. They had disappointment, not peace, for their pains. Some have indulged the greed for gain, and supposed that the accumulation of wealth would satisfy their hearts and render all quiet and contented; but the appetite grew by what it fed on, and every day added to

the soul's unrest. Some have followed sensual pleasures and hoped that the gratification of their desires would be satisfying the wants of nature, and must therefore needs produce the quiet and contentment that is wanting to make men happy. But hope told them a flattering tale. Aches and pains came from indulgence, and the passion increased while the enjoyment diminished. Moralists succeeded no better than sensualists. They taught that there is peace in doing right, and the conscience kept reproving the heart for going wrong, even while the actions were regulated by the law of rectitude. And so it is to-day. The world sees the need for peace, and endeavors to furnish what is needed; but it uniformly fails and in the nature of the case must fail. Not as the world gives does our Lord give peace.

2. "My peace I give unto you," the Savior says. That is something different from the world's peace. "Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice because I said, I go unto the Father; for my Father is greater than I. And now I have told you, before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass ye might believe. Hereafter I will not talk much with you; for the prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me. But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment even so I do; arise, let us go hence." What have these words to do with the soul's want and longing for peace, and with the attainment of that which is so great a need and so much desired? Much, every way. They show us that the Son of God, who became man for our salvation and thus less than the Father in His assumed humanity, was willing to execute the Father's gracious will to rescue men by tasting death for them all. He must go through suffering and death to the Father, if those whom He came to save should be delivered from sin and all its

terrible consequences. He tells His disciples this in advance, that they might believe in Him; for on such faith all eventually depends for them. If they understood this and realized it, they would not be so sorrowful about His departure from them, but would be glad that He is willing to endure pain and death for their salvation. In going to the Father in this way of agony He must encounter the great enemy of our souls, who, because of our sin, has a claim upon us. We are doomed, and he claims his prey. But the Lord, who takes our place, is sinless. Therefore the prince of this world hath nothing in Him. He goes voluntarily to the sacrifice, in love to the souls that He came to save. He completes the redemption by shedding His blood and going to the Father.

This secures our peace. Our souls are not at rest because our sin burdens us. We know that it merits punishment. No sophistry can quiet our conscience. It condemns us. Our heart is troubled. Who can deliver us from the body of this death? Go where we may, look whithersoever we will, there is nothing but condemnation confronting us and staring us in the face. The world tries to give peace, and fails. It has no peace to give. Jesus only has secured it and can give it. What we need is a remedy for sin, and He is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. He has died to save us. The chastisement of our peace is upon Him. If we sought to find rest in efforts to meet the requirements of justice by conforming to the law, our sin would be our condemnation. We do not fulfill the law. And even if we fulfilled it, the old sin would still demand death. The debt would still be unpaid. The blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin. He has paid our debt and fulfilled all righteousness for us. Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We are justified by faith in the merits of our Lord Jesus. His righteousness avails for

us. We have remission of sins through His blood. And now that He has gone to the Father and atoned for all our sins, He speaks peace to the souls of them that believe. There is no need that our hearts should be troubled, for we have peace with God. "It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Rom. 8, 33. 34. Therefore He tells His disciples, "If ye loved me ye would rejoice because I said, I go unto the Father." On that our peace depends.

How blessed are they who love the Lord! Earth has no treasures such as He bestows. And yet we are so slow and sluggish in appropriating them. You, dear brethren, have been called by the Gospel to this blessed inheritance. Will you not be more diligent and more earnest in profiting by your privileges? On this pentecostal day may the Holy Spirit revive His work in you, and lead you to a fuller realization of your blessedness and to a more ardent zeal in bringing it to others. "The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost." Amen.

Trinity Sunday.

JOHN 3, 1–15.

There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto Him, Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto Him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus answered and said unto Him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

Beloved in the Lord:

We have known and believed the love which God hath to us. He "so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." We have known and believed the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. "Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye

through His poverty might be rich." We have known and believed the comfort of the Holy Spirit. "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." The Triune God is engaged in saving us from death.

This day is devoted especially to the consideration of the great mystery of the Holy Trinity. That is a subject that is frequently regarded as of no importance to common people. Many look upon it as a theme meant only for the exercise of intellectual subtlety and speculation, with which the simple faith of the ordinary Christian has nothing to do. It is not so. The doctrine of the Trinity is one of the most practical of all revealed truths. God the Father sends His eternal Son into the flesh to save us, and the Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, applies the salvation to sinners and leads them to everlasting happiness. Does this not concern us all, most deeply concern us all?

Our text presents the subject in this practical light. It shows in his sin and misery and helplessness the creature whom God had made good and happy, and teaches us how the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost effects the restoration of man to his lost estate. That whole work centers in

THE NEW BIRTH,

of which our Gospel treats, and to which we shall to-day direct our thoughts.

I. Let us inquire, in the first place, what renders such a new birth necessary.

Ever since God created man male and female, "and blessed them, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth," children have been born into the world from generation to generation. But these children were not born, and are not born now, as their first

parents were made. The Bible says, "God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him." Gen. 1, 27. That means that man was made pure and holy like his Maker, with heart and will in harmony with his God. Therefore it is written of him as well as of the rest of the creation, "God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good." If children had been born in such righteousness and true holiness, it would not be necessary that they should be born again in order to be pleasing to God and enjoy eternal happiness. Such holiness is pleasing to God and is happiness. But children were not born thus. The creature that God had made, disobeyed His command and became wicked. He sinned, and with sin came death. The purity of heart was lost, and the harmony with God was lost, and happiness was lost. Instead of the divine image the image of the tempter was impressed upon our progenitors. Only after that were children born. "Adam lived a hundred and thirty years," says the inspired record, "and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image." Gen. 5, 3. That was not the likeness and image of God, which had departed. The descendants were born in the sin which had been contracted and under the curse which had been pronounced. Therefore the psalmist says: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." And St. Paul writes: "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Rom. 5, 12. And to the Ephesians he writes, reminding them of what they were by nature, as all others are: "You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh,

fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." Eph. 2, 1–3. That is the condition in which all children have been born into this world. That is the reason why they must be born again before they can see or enter into the kingdom of God.

Our Lord sums it all up in the words, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." The word designates the fallen, sinful condition of our nature. St. Paul describes it when he says: "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh can not please God." Rom. 8, 5–8. The carnal or fleshly mind is that with which we are born, that which we have by nature, and which stands in opposition to the will of God. It is enmity against God. That is the nature which our fathers had since the fall, and that is the nature which they have ever since transmitted to their children. These have the same nature as the parents: every creature brings forth after its kind. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. It cannot be otherwise. And flesh cannot please God. Therefore Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

You perceive that the point is not the effecting of some improvement in the use of powers in man's possession. The thinking is bad and the affections are bad and the choices and volitions are bad. That cannot be gainsaid. There could be better thinking, if men were better educated; there could be better desires and better affections if men were accustomed to live in higher spheres and among nobler surroundings; there could be better willing

if the soul were lifted higher and effected its choice among objects that are more elevated. He who seeks his gratification in science and art and literature lives in a realm more elevated than he who indulges his animal appetites and knows of no pleasures but those of eating and drinking and sexual lust, and his thinking and feeling and willing will be of a relatively nobler cast. But he will still be flesh, and the difference will be only between the carnal mind that is refined and the carnal mind that is coarse. No change in objects of love or hate, of desire or aversion, will make the heart other than it is. What is needed is more than better works; it is a better mind and a better heart. And these a man cannot give himself any more than the Ethiopian can change his skin or the leopard his spots. A change in the nature is necessary, because that is enmity to God and under God's curse, whatever it may do. And nature cannot change itself. Not an improvement of our nature is needed as it is brought into the world by our birth, but a new birth. The flesh never can please God; we must be born again of the Spirit.

II. What does such a new birth mean? Let us endeavor to answer the question.

Nicodemus said to Jesus, when the necessity of regeneration was declared, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?" The question borders on sarcasm, and the man who put it deserves the rebuke which He received when the Lord said, "Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?" He was a teacher among the Jews and ought to have known something of the revealed mystery of the Gospel. But his "How can these things be?" expresses the thought of many who ought to know more of the ways of God. The Savior simply reiterated the necessity of the new birth with the reason for it, now pointing out the means by which it is to be

accomplished. The mystery of the birth remains. What reason would suggest is as stupid as reason's suggestions are wont to be in spiritual things, which it does not understand. If one entered again into his mother's womb and were born a second time, he would be born a second time of the flesh, and nothing would be gained. The new birth is not carnal, but spiritual, and is effected by no natural power, but by the Spirit of God.

To explain what it is we must take note of the heavenly things, of which our Lord speaks later in our lesson. This work of regeneration takes place here on earth, and is the result of eternal counsels formed in heaven. At the foundation of it lies the whole divine plan of the redemption with its wonderful execution. "Verily, verily I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" The work of regeneration is a matter of experience, taking place in the hearts of men while they sojourn here below. But there are facts and thoughts of God which lie upon a still higher plane. And of these the Triune God testifies, that we may believe, though we have no testimony but that of His Word. The Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost agree in witnessing to these things, and therefore the Lord says, "We speak that we do know." And what are these things that are so solemnly urged upon us as the heavenly things which we are to believe upon evidence so ample and so sure? They are the things concerning Christ, how He is the Son of the Father, very God of very God, who took on Him our nature, though without its sin, in order to redeem us and make us new creatures. "No man hath ascended up to heaven but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." The Father sent His own dear Son into

the world to save it, and He went to the Father again that He might prepare a place for us. He is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and intercedes for us, and only through Him have we access to the heavenly kingdom. He is Lord of all, and even when He walked visibly on earth in the form of a servant He was "the Son of man which is in heaven." But He came to go through suffering and death to the Father. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." He must be lifted up on the cross and taste death for every man, that as the snake-bitten Israelites were to look upon the brazen serpent and be healed, all nations might look upon the Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world, and live. Our sins were laid on Him, and He must in our stead bear the wages of sin, which is death. "Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." Luke 24, 46. 47. The great salvation from death could be secured only by the tremendous sacrifice on the cross, and to effect it God spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all.

Do you ask what all this has to do with the new birth, and especially with the point now under consideration? Much, every way. To understand the new birth we must understand the new life, whose entrance into the soul makes us new creatures. Jesus says, "I am the way and the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." John 14, 6. Therefore He complains of those who will not hear Him, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." John 5, 40. Therefore too He assures us: "These things are written that ye might believe that

Jesus is the Christ, and that believing ye might have life through His name." John 20, 32. Accordingly St. Paul says: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Gal. 2, 20. Those who are dead in sins are made alive by the gift of grace from Christ's fullness. The Holy Spirit takes of Christ's and gives it to us. The Spirit giveth life, but He gives the life which is in our Savior. "Therefore if any man be in Christ He is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ." 2 Cor. 5, 17. 18. Such a new creature is spirit, as distinguished from the old man, which is flesh.

That by which the Holy Spirit joins us to Jesus and makes us partakers of His life, and of all the righteousness which the new representative of our race, the second Adam, acquired by His obedience unto death, is faith. The Son of man was lifted up that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. The believer is in Him, and shares all His merits. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Rom. 8, 1. 2. The Holy Spirit works the faith in us by which we are justified, so that our sins are not imputed to us, but the righteousness of our Savior is set down to our account. But when we believe we are not in the condition in which we were born. Naturally we have no faith. The flesh does not believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. We must become spirit before we can embrace Christ as our Savior and rejoice in His righteousness. That is all the work of God. "For by grace are ye saved through faith,

and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." Eph. 2, 8–10. The Holy Spirit comes to apply the blessedness which Christ has acquired for men, and to this end He gives them the faith which unites with Jesus and makes them partakers of His life. Then the new birth has taken place. That is wherein it consists. A new life is given us instead of the unbelieving misery of the flesh, and that makes us new creatures with new powers. That is what is meant by the new birth. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." 1 John 5, 1.

That such a change in the soul will become manifest, at least in the consciousness of the individual, in changed thoughts and affections and desires and emotions, it is scarcely necessary expressly to mention. "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." Rom. 8, 5. 6. That is the ground upon which the admonitions of Holy Scripture to Christians are all based. It is not presumed that the flesh will ever become pleasing to God: that cannot be: but when the new birth has taken place, that is, when by the Holy Spirit a new life from the fullness of our Savior's life has been introduced and thus justifying faith has been wrought, the old things of the flesh are no more recognized as the object of life, and the new things of the Spirit take their place as our treasures and means of fulfilling our mission and obtaining our happiness. "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Rom. 8, 12. 13. And this must needs show

itself in the changed life even outwardly. "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world, and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." 1 John 5, 4. The new birth is a participation in the life of our Lord through the power of the Holy Spirit, and "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." Gal. 5, 24. 25.

III. But there is a third question which claims our attention: How is this new birth effected?

Our text gives us a clear and explicit answer; but that answer is an offense to millions, who inquire with Nicodemus, sometimes even with less reverence than Nicodemus, "How can these things be?" But the answer respecting the means is as clear and as explicit as language can make it, whatever men may say or think. When the questioning ruler of the Jews inquired how a man could be born when he is old, and suggested the absurdity of entering a second time into his mother's womb, "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." That we must be born of the Spirit is amazing enough to the reason of man, which cannot see how a regeneration can take place at all, whether by the Spirit or otherwise; but that we must be born of water and the Spirit, that seems too much to believe even for many who would not resist the Spirit. How can these things be?

That our Lord refers to baptism as the means of regeneration candid minds will at once perceive, whatever difficulties the fact may be supposed to involve. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." These are the Lord's words, and they are emphasized by His solemn "Verily, verily, I say unto thee." The great work of regeneration is God's:

that is beyond all dispute. No man could change human nature and make that good which is born evil. Therefore ye must be born again, and born of God. God the Father sends His own dear Son to offer Himself as a ransom for the sins of the world and make a renewal of the divine image in righteousness and true holiness possible. God the Son assumes our nature and fulfills all righteousness, passing through death in our stead and overcoming it, that we through faith might share His life, over which death has no more power. The Holy Ghost applies to us the new life which is in our blessed Lord, according to His own words, "He shall glorify me, for He shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you." John 16, 14. The new birth is unquestionably God's work. He performs it by His Spirit. It is the Spirit that quickeneth. We must be born of the Spirit in order to be spirit instead of flesh, which we are by our natural birth. "They that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh," says St. Paul to the Christians at Rome, "but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." Rom. 8, 8. 9. No man can be a Christian while he denies this needful work of the Spirit. But our Lord says that we must be born of water and of the Spirit. He thus points to baptism as the means by which the Holy Spirit performs His wonderful work of regeneration, and blessed are they who are not offended at His gracious words. They are words that are everywhere repeated in substance when the holy sacrament of baptism is mentioned as to its design. St. Paul says: "Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word." Christ is Himself the Savior, and there is salvation in no other. But He uses water baptism to apply this salvation, giving it saving power by His Gospel, so that it is not mere

water, but water comprehended in His Word. It is the Spirit that quickeneth, but He uses the divinely appointed means, and we are therefore born again of water and of the Spirit. So the same apostle says in another place: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior." Tit. 3, 5. 6. The same truth is thus expressed which our Lord sets before Nicodemus. We must be born again by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. Thus the sinner is made to share the fruits of the redemption, and is accepted in the Beloved as a "fellow citizen with the saints and of the household of God." Hence it is written: "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus; for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Gal. 3, 26. 27.

It is not reverent to start difficulties and awaken doubts about the truth of these plain statements of the Holy Ghost, and it is deadly to cast them aside as foolishness, notwithstanding the divine testimony in their behalf. Nicodemus could not comprehend the blessed truth, and gave vent to his perplexity in the words, "How can these things be?" Human reason can never comprehend them: they must be spiritually discerned; and therefore to this day not only is Nicodemus' question repeated again and again, but myriads even of professing Christians are induced by the flesh in the guise of reason to reject the words of the Spirit, and thus to deprive themselves of the great comfort of baptism and to imperil their spiritual life. There are mysteries in earthly things too, and no reasonable man doubts a well-established fact because he fails to comprehend it in all its relations. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth." If

we do not even understand the mystery of the winds in their coming and going, should it seem a marvelous thing to us that the work of God in the soul passes all our understanding and remains inexplicable to reason? Certainly when we apply our earthly rules and tests to heavenly things the question will be natural enough, "How can these things be?" How can a person be born of water? Even admitting that a person could be born a second time, how could water produce the wonderful result? Such questions, emanating from the flesh, quite overlook the fact that the wonderful work is effected by Him who has all power in His hands, and that His Word can effect what He pleases, with water or without water; and when He declares His pleasure to save us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, must not the objections of reason seem to the believer a mere display of its lamentable blindness? All difficulties vanish when the soul believes in Christ, to whom is given all power in heaven and in earth, and who was lifted up on the cross for our salvation. He can save us, and He does save us in His appointed way. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Nor should we allow our joy of faith to be for a moment spoiled by the stupidities of reason, declaring things which lie above its plane to be incredible or even impossible, notwithstanding that the Lord who made all and governs all declares them to be real. We know that Christ has not only offered Himself as a sacrifice for our sins and secured life and salvation for us, and that this salvation is preached to all nations by His command, in order that men may believe it and be glad; but also that He has come to us in the holy sacrament of baptism and marked us individually as His own, regenerating us by water and the Holy Spirit, and making us heirs of eternal glory. I know that I am Christ's, for I have been baptized into Him and have thus put on Christ with all

His merits. That is the precious comfort which the children of God find in the holy sacrament of regeneration.

Has it not become manifest to you, dear brethren, that the doctrine of the Trinity is of great practical moment and full of consolation to us sinners? Behold what manner of love the Father hath to us, that He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all! Behold the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, to fulfill all righteousness for us! Behold the comfort of the Holy Ghost in the great work of our restoration to life, that we might be joint heirs with Jesus of eternal glory! Give earnest heed to these things, that your joy may be full. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen.

First Sunday after Trinity.

LUKE 16, 19–31.

There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee, therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, they have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

Dear Brethren in Christ:

The ways of God seem unequal when only this life is taken into consideration. Wicked men seem to live in a round of incessant pleasure, while righteous souls are vexed and troubled. But compensations come. Sin brings misery. If it does not receive its reward in this life, it certainly will in the future world. "Fret not thyself because of evil-doers, neither be thou envious against the

workers of iniquity; for they shall soon be cut down like the grass and wither as the green herb." Ps. 37, 1. 2. There is really no ground for envying them, even if living on earth were all of life. Rolling in wealth and living in luxury is not necessarily happiness. Things are not always as they seem. "A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked; for the arms of the wicked shall be broken, but the Lord upholdeth the righteous." Ps. 37, 16. 17. Justice must eventually triumph and wrong be punished. The ways of God are equal. This is illustrated in our text. There was a poor man who in this life had evil things, though he feared God and walked in righteousness. He was full of sores, and had not even the needful bread to keep his suffering soul in connection with his afflicted body. They laid him at a rich man's gate to beg, and the very dogs, of whose meat he would gladly have eaten to satisfy his hunger, seemed to pity him and came and licked his sores. He died. There is no record that any help was given him, and in his poverty and his pain he died. But then all was righted. "The beggar died and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." The narrative presents this as a matter of course. His time had come to receive the good things which were not accorded him on earth. He was taken where there are pleasures for evermore at God's right hand. There was a rich man who had his good things in this life, although he feared not God and regarded not the sufferings of man. He was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. All that wealth could furnish he indulged in, and ate and drank and was merry. But that could not last. "The rich man also died." Then again all was righted. The narrative is terrible in its calmness and its brevity. "In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments." This too is a matter of course, that he went to hell. He heeded no warning in

his lifetime, and now was doomed to the place of torment. It is not a pleasant topic to dwell upon, but it is needful for our warning. Let us give our attention to the teachings of Scripture concerning

THE PLACE OF TORMENT,

that we may give diligence to escape it by fleeing for refuge to the hope set before us. We shall consider three questions pertaining to it: 1. *Who are consigned to it?* 2. *What is its nature?* 3. *How may we escape it?* God grant us wisdom from on high to shun the damnation of hell and lay hold on eternal life!

1. Who are doomed to suffer in the place of torment of which our text speaks? The answer would seem to be easy. All men are sinners and deserve it. Hence all men, if they get their deserts, are doomed to it. But if men do not get their deserts, then it is to be presumed that no man will be doomed to the horrors of hell, as the power and mercy that rescues one will also rescue the other. And yet it is not so. Neither all men are consigned to it nor do all men escape it. Some are doomed to it and some are not.

It certainly is true that all men deserve it. "For we have before proved," says St. Paul, "both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." Rom. 3, 9–12. And again he says: "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Rom, 3, 23. But that implies that all men are doomed to the punishment which is due to sin. "The wages of sin is death." Rom. 6, 23. Those who continue in sin treasure up unto themselves

"wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render unto every man according to his deeds." Rom. 2, 5. 6. Hence our Lord says to the impenitent Scribes and Pharisees, the children of them that killed the prophets, and they themselves filling up the measure of their fathers, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" Matt. 23, 33. This damnation is due to all sin, the wages of which is always death. And as all men have sinned, it is due to all men. Hence St. Paul says that all of us were "by nature the children of wrath." Eph. 2, 3.

But though all deserve damnation, not all are consigned to the torments of hell. Some are saved. That is not because God has delivered some, whilst He left others to their doom. He is no respecter of persons. He has mercy on all. He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to save it. The Son of His love laid down His life as a ransom for all. The salvation which was secured by His infinite sacrifice is proclaimed to all, with the serious intent that all should believe and be saved. All are dead in sin and doomed to the place of torment; all are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb and may escape it. But not all do escape it. Some are consigned to it notwithstanding the great salvation which has been effected. It is because by their unbelief they reject the gracious offer of deliverance. "For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth on Him is not condemned, but He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." John 3, 17. 18. The curse is upon men because of sin, and they can escape the damnation of hell only through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus by faith in His name. "He that believeth

on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." John 3, 36. That answers our question. Those who die in their sins are consigned to the place of torment, having rejected the Savior who alone could deliver them.

Such a person was the rich man in our text. That was not his condemnation, that he was rich. Wealth has dangers, and the Holy Spirit warns us against its enticements. "They that will be rich," He tells us, "fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." 1 Tim. 6, 9. 10. Greed for gain is sure to blunt the conscience and prompt to the use of unrighteous means for acquiring riches; therefore our Lord speaks of the "mammon of unrighteousness." And as the ways of getting wealth are beset with dangers, so also is the use of it when gotten. Hence the apostle writes: "Charge them that are rich in this world that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." 1 Tim. 6, 17–19. He does not condemn the possession of riches; on the contrary, he exhorts to the right use of them. Only when men set their hearts on their gold and trust in that instead of putting their trust in the living God, are they commanded to sell all that they have and give to the poor; for then it is a question of life and death, and it is better to tear loose from that which is dragging the soul down to the place of torment. The damnation of the rich

man of whom our Gospel speaks was not simply that he was wealthy. He might have used his wealth to the glory of God and the assistance of his neighbor. But he would not. And that was his ruin. He was high-minded and trusted in uncertain riches; he was selfish and unmerciful, faring sumptuously every day while the poor and suffering were left without bread and comfort. He cared not for God nor for man: he cared only for self. If others were in want, what was that to him? But he died; he died without repentance and without a Savior; he died in his sins: how then could he escape the damnation of hell? Therefore he lifted up his eyes, being in torments.

II. What is the nature of that place of torment? Our text gives answer when it tells us that the rich man was "tormented in this flame," that he could obtain no alleviation of his suffering, and that there was no hope of deliverance from this horrible abode of the damned.

The character of the suffering is not particularly described in our lesson, but there is enough related to indicate the horror of the place. "In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment;" "I am tormented in this flame;" "thou art tormented;" "lest they also come into this place of torment"—these are the words used to show the pain and anguish which are endured in hell. And are they not enough to picture the unutterable misery of lost souls, whom the fire burns and the worm gnaws—"where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched?" Mark 9, 44. They are banished from the presence of God, the Fountain of all bliss as well as of all good, and consigned to the "everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Matt. 25, 41. There "the smoke of their torment ascendeth for ever and ever, and they have no rest day nor night." Rev. 14, 11. Deprived of everything that would give the soul a moment's joy or peace, and doomed to everything that could rack it with pain, the

damned lie in their torment wailing and gnashing their teeth, and all we know or dream of agony is theirs.

Nor is there a moment's relief accorded them. The rich man in hell "seeth Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom; and he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame." But he found no relief. It was too late now to cry for mercy or for help. He had received his good things in his lifetime. Now the mercy of God was exhausted for him. That mercy had been showered richly on him, but he had resisted all the goodness that was meant to lead him to repentance; and now the probation was past and the final result was reached. There is no help after death. If salvation is rejected or neglected in the present life, there is no further remedy. The doom is then fixed, and no efforts beyond could be of any avail. "Beside all this, between us and you," says Abraham to the rich man, "there is a great gulf fixed, so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot, neither can they pass to us that would come from thence." There is no possibility of affording any help to the damned; the place of torment is beyond the reach of hope; an impassible gulf is fixed between it and all the sources whence help could come or hope of relief find any support.

That renders us certain that there is no deliverance from the place of torment. They can not pass from thence to the abode of bliss, which is prepared for them that love the Lord. The punishment of the wicked is eternal. "Their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched." It is an "everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." "The smoke of their torment ascendeth for ever and ever." It is vain for men to argue that the words used to describe the eternity of torment may mean but a very long time, so that it would seem to man an

eternity. There is no ground in the Scriptures for laying such a flattering unction to the soul. Not only the words everlasting and eternal are used, but the descriptive phrases employed, to which no such limiting explanation can be given, are of the same import. The fire can not be quenched, the worm does not die. Therefore the smoke of the torment ascendeth for ever. And the words upon which reason would found a vain hope themselves resist the comforting interpretation. For our Lord says of the righteous and of the wicked: "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." Matt. 25, 46. If everlasting does not mean everlasting in the one case, what evidence could we have that it means everlasting in the other? The word is the same in both cases: it is the same Greek word that is translated everlasting and eternal. If everlasting punishment means punishment that shall some time have an end, then everlasting life means a life that shall some time have an end. And thus the argument of reason against the Lord's words, while they are meant to give some hope to the impenitent and lost, would deprive the penitent and saved of all hope. For if the life which is ours by faith is not everlasting, though our Lord assures us that it is, what would become of us, even supposing that we did inherit everlasting life, when that "everlasting" is at an end? Let us give no heed to such human speculations. The wicked have merited their doom, and God in His mercy has done for them what, in accordance with His justice, could be done. Listen not to the tempter's suggestion that it would be unmerciful to consign the unbeliever to endless torment. God is merciful—more merciful than our poor understanding can comprehend. And He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. "What could have been done more to my vineyard," He says, "that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it

should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" Is. 5, 4. Salvation is prepared for men; they are bought with a great price. And all that is needful for them that they may lay hold on eternal life is offered them. If they reject every offer and choose death rather than life, God will not force them into heaven. But when they die in their sin their torment is eternal, as the bliss is eternal when men die in faith. In the place of torment there is unspeakable misery, in which there is no relief and from which there is no deliverance.

III. - How can we escape this doom of horror? The question deeply concerns us all: let us give it the attention which its importance demands. Reason suggests a way which fails; God shows a way that is sure.

The rich man that was lost, when he found that there was no relief and no deliverance for the doomed, moved probably by the fear that there might be an increase of his misery, if others whom he helped to mislead should be damned also, requested Abraham to send Lazarus with testimony from the eternal world to warn them. "Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house; for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

How natural the suggestion seems, and how reasonable the expedient looks! Souls disregard the warnings and entreaties that are presented, and go on in their sin until destruction overtakes them. The horrors of hell seem unreal, and present pleasures are enticing. If men

were really persuaded that their life of sin must end in irremediable and eternal wretchedness, would they not abandon their evil ways and learn righteousness? Therefore it must be the dictate of mercy to send them evidence which could not be so easily disregarded. That could be done by sending them a witness from the other world. If one who had lived here and passed through death should come back from the dead and tell what he had himself seen there of the condition of the departed; should confirm all that the Scriptures declare of the horrors of hell and the glories of heaven; should warn every man to flee from the wrath to come and lay hold on eternal life,—would not his testimony be accepted, and would men still be such fools as to rush into destruction with their eyes wide open? How reasonable it all seems, and how ready men are to imagine that God has not done all that might have been done, and might still be done, to rescue sinners from everlasting suffering!

And yet how unreasonable it all is! If one came from the dead, how should he authenticate his mission? What evidence could be offered to make it manifest that he is not an impostor? The proof that he was really dead, and really witnessed the things of which he testifies, would be scouted as an insult to human intelligence. Would those men who want other evidence than that which God has given, be likely to believe a ghost story, or to be influenced by the message which the alleged ghost delivers? Even if some were induced to give the story credence, that such a visitor has come from the other world, who would believe that he has seen the things which he testifies or that he tells truly what he has seen? And even if they did regard it probable that the story is not a fabrication, how could that overcome the lusts of the flesh and bring about a life of righteousness and holiness? The whole suggestion is preposterous. There is nothing reasonable

in it. The device is as devoid of rational foundation and as thoroughly impracticable as human devices in things divine always are, and in the nature of things must be. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

That points out the true way of escape, while it sets aside the ways of man's device. It points us to the Scriptures, which are given by inspiration of God, and which are "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." 2 Tim. 3, 16. 17. They point us to Jesus, the Savior of the world, and lead us to Him by faith, that through Him we might have eternal life. "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." When such remission has been obtained there is no damnation. The wages of sin is death, but when the sin is forgiven the wages do not follow. There is then life and salvation, because those who flee to Jesus as their Savior have part in His life and have imputed to them His righteousness. "There is therefore no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Rom. 8, 1. They cling to Him by faith, and he that believeth shall not perish, but have everlasting life. And this faith is not the result of human reflection and is not wrought by human means. God works it in us by the divine testimony and power which the Scriptures convey. The life of sin is not abandoned because of a human conviction that it is more conducive to happiness here and hereafter to live in righteousness. Such a change in the choice of means to gratify the love of pleasure is not serving God and living righteously and godly in this present world. That will not effect our escape from the place of torment to which sin consigns the impenitent soul. Ye must be born again. And this God's power effects through

the Word. Hence the apostle says: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith." Rom. 1, 16. 17. There is no salvation for souls condemned, except in Christ, of whom the Scriptures testify and faith in whom is wrought by their power. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him?" Heb. 2, 3.

My dear brethren, the place of eternal torment is a terrible reality, and those who die in their sins cannot escape it. God is merciful, infinitely merciful, and has provided a way of escape. He calls us to-day again to give earnest heed to it, that by His Gospel we may be brought to Jesus and established in Him unto eternal life. Let not the warnings and entreaties of divine mercy be in vain. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. Amen.

Second Sunday after Trinity.

LUKE 14, 16–24.

A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: and sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.

Dear Brethren:

Many persons who have passed through troubles and cares, as all must have done who have experience of life, would leap for joy if they were satisfied that there is a land where cares and troubles never come, and that for each of them there is a place prepared in that happy land. But such a land exists. And that there are persons who are not certain of its existence, or not of the proprietor's design to give them a share in its blessedness, is their own fault. For all the information needed to become certain is within their reach; and if they will not listen to the announcement made respecting it, nor accept their title-deed to it, nor journey towards it, the loss is theirs. The place is prepared, it is only for us to take possession; or, to use

the illustration of our text, the Supper is ready, the Lord invites us all, and we need but take our places and enjoy it. Let us to-day endeavor to realize this in considering

THE CALL TO THE GREAT SUPPER.

In doing this there are four points which claim our attention: 1. *The Supper*, 2. *The Call*, 3. *The Excuses*, 4. *The Consequences of rejecting the Call.*

I. The Supper consists of those divine gifts which satisfy the soul forever. The food is such that if a man eat of it he shall never die; the water is such that if a man drink of it he shall never suffer thirst. The table is spread with angels' food; it contains the bounties of the kingdom of grace and of glory.

1. *The gifts of the kingdom of grace are there.* It is no ordinary meal, the purpose of which is to satisfy the body's wants. It is the soul whose hunger and thirst is to be stilled, and the food must therefore be spiritual food. The Supper embraces the whole complex of gracious gifts as they are offered to men in Christ.

He who prepares the Supper is God. It is prepared at an immense cost. The King gives it, and it must needs be royal. An earthly monarch's grandest feast, prepared at the largest expense which the royal treasury can reach, would be miserably common-place and poor compared with this Supper of heaven's King, for the preparation of which Heaven's costliest jewel was appropriated. No gold nor silver nor glittering gem of earth could ever purchase the smallest morsel on the table. The bounties were bought at the cost of human life—nay, at the cost of His blood who was more than man, who was over all, God blessed forever! Never can we realize the magnitude and majesty of this Supper without remembering this. The Son of

God died for us. Had this not been there never could have been an invitation extended to us, to come and partake and be eternally blest—there never could have been such a Supper prepared. For we are all by nature doomed to die, and the King who now calls is the King who was wronged and who justly doomed us. Herein is love, that He spared not His own Son, but freely gave Him up for us all! And thus were our sins borne away and the way opened to feed us with heavenly bread.

Christ is that bread. "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." Jno. 6, 51. Nothing else could satisfy our souls' wants, our spiritual appetite. We are otherwise without God and without hope in the world. The present is comfortless and the future is dark. We are hungry and have no bread, and no prospect of being provided with it. He is the bread of life. He took on Himself the curse which was our due, and fulfilled all righteousness which was our duty, and gives Himself to us now, that His righteousness may avail for us. This is what we receive in this royal Supper: Christ with all His merits. Having these, there is no more condemnation to us: we are heirs of heaven and joint heirs with Christ. Such bread could be purchased only at such a price: it is worthy of our King, who is love, whose mercy endureth forever. Our souls eat this bread and Christ is formed in us: all His is ours, and every longing of our spirits is satisfied.

The effect of eating this supper is therefore joy and peace. We have forgiveness of sin, life, and salvation. Our title is clear to heaven with its bliss through faith in Jesus' name. We hunger no more. Cares may come and sorrows, but our peace is still perpetual. For we eat the bread of heaven and are content. The law still denounces

its condemnation, and we still are led to repent of shortcomings and transgressions; but joy in the Holy Ghost is always ours, if we only have Christ. The prospect of everlasting bliss, unmarred by cares, undimmed by clouds, cheers and consoles us. The bounties of the Supper are ineffably rich: their effect upon the soul is ineffably happy. And when life with its sorrows is past, the enjoyment is complete, undisturbed; for

2. *The Supper embraces the gifts of the kingdom of glory.* We are called to eat in this world—the Supper is set before us here. But the bounties are not limited to the present. Christ is, indeed, our peace on earth; and, although it doth not yet appear what we shall be, seeing that in the world we have tribulation, notwithstanding our blessedness in Christ, our peace passeth understanding now. But the bliss will be perfect where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest. Now, when the text tells us that the Supper is ready, it not only means that it is all prepared for enjoyment as far as may be here, but also that it is prepared for everlasting, unalloyed enjoyment in heaven. We are called to the inheritance of the saints in light: the clear title is given us now, and the joy which such a title bestows, the full possession, and the bliss which such possession imparts, will be given when life's fitful fever is over. These gifts pass all present comprehension. They are the blessedness of heaven. Truly, "blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." They who come to the Supper receive Christ now, and enjoy Him forever in glory.

II. The Call to this great Supper next invites our attention, for we all have an invitation.

1. *It was given first to the Jews.* In His great mercy God, by various arrangements, kept a peculiar people separate from others, that they might not be infected by the idolatry into which the multitude ran, and in

which millions continue to lie. By precepts and promises He built a wall around this people, that the knowledge of the one true God might be preserved, and that a people might be prepared for the Messiah when the time for His advent should arrive. These people were the Jews. They were bidden to the Supper long before it was fully prepared for all nations; they were informed of its preparation and had all the means needed to keep them in readiness to sit down when the table should be spread. To these the servants were first sent with the message: "Come, for all things are now ready." The house of Israel must receive the invitation first according to our Lord's word: for it is recorded in Matt. 10, 5. 6: "These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But the chief men of the Jews rejected the counsel of God. They were too proud, too righteous in their own conceit, to accept the gracious invitation, and all began to make excuses. "So that servant came and showed his Lord these things. Then the Master of the house, being angry, said to His servant: Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind." If the rich and honored among men, if the proud and the titled of earth will not come, there are still those who may receive the word of invitation gladly: "to the poor the Gospel is preached." Even the messengers to call others were chosen from among the poor, the high and haughty refusing to hear and heed the invitation. "For ye see your calling brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise." The men who were wise in their own conceits and righteous in their own esteem were rejected,

and the poor and heavy-laden among the Jews, represented as maimed and halt and blind—the sin-sick and contrite, helpless souls, were brought to the Supper. But this was not all. There was room still, and now the servants were sent beyond the house of Israel.

2. *The call was given to the Gentiles also.* The Lord sent the invitation beyond the city now. He "said unto the servant, Go out into the high-ways and hedges and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled." Christianity was not to be confined, like Judaism, to one people and nation. It is catholic, that is, it is meant to embrace all people and times and tongues. Therefore when, in accordance with the divine will, the apostle Paul preached to the Jews, and "they spake against those things which were spoken by him, contradicting and blaspheming," it is related, that "then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold and said, It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles: for so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set Thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that Thou shouldest be for salvation to the ends of the earth." Acts 13, 46. 47. Thus the middle wall of partition between the Jews and others was broken down, and the call became universal, as it is now. No nation or age is excluded; the worst of men, poor and degraded in character as well as in condition though they be, are just as much intended as the best and the most honored. Whosoever will, let him come; that is the broad invitation; and it is full of comfort to the maimed and halt and blind, and to those along the highways and hedges, yea, to all.

3. *How is the call given?* The Master does not go out to all the guests Himself, but sends His servants,

authorizing them to invite in His name and furnishing them with the means requisite to this end.

Men are not brought into the house of the Master, to His royal Supper, without means. The Supper is ready, but no one will enjoy it who is not invited. It is sheer fanaticism to teach and believe that the Supper is enjoyed by persons to whom the inviting Word of the Savior has not come, or that this Word will come to them in some other way than through the revelation given us in the Holy Scriptures.

The Lord sends out His servants to call the guests. "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" Rom. 10, 13. 14. But these servants come not in their own name, or upon their own authority. They have not prepared the Supper, nor are they the proprietors of it when it is prepared. They are the stewards, keeping house for another, the servants employed about the property of another. If one come, therefore, teaching what the Master has not taught, or making conditions of admission to the Supper which the Master has not made, all his words are naught. But when a servant comes in His Master's name and brings His Master's message, no one can own the Master and reject the servant; he who hears the latter hears the former. This the Scriptures expressly state. Our Lord says, Luke 10, 16 in reference to the disciples sent forth to invite men to the great Supper: "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth Him that sent me." Precisely on this account it is that our Lord ascribes such great efficacy to the word of the ministry; for He says: "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and

whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." John 20, 23. Not that the servants have any such power in their own persons; but the Master has, and His Word has the same efficacy when spoken by His servants, as when spoken by Himself. Therefore their call is just as efficacious and valid as the Master's, and no one need fear that the invitation extended to him by the servant in the Master's name, will prove false and futile, when given according to the Master's Word.

But this of course implies that the means must be the Master's, not any of the minister's invention. Hence it is distinctly told us what must be done. Preach the Word, baptize the people in the name of the Trinity, administer the Holy Communion; and where this is done, the Master's will is performed and the Master's work is done. Hence the invitation is given by these holy means, the Word of the Lord being chief, for without this there is neither Baptism nor Communion of the Lord's Body and Blood. The call is given by the Lord Himself through the Word, whether read or preached, and whether announced by the Master or by His servants.

4. *How does the call operate?* Some say that it is irresistible in the case of the elect, but altogether inefficacious, powerless, in the case of the reprobate. It is not so. It is powerless in no case. The word of the Lord is His power in all cases. The lost who persistently reject the proffered grace, have had the same grace unto salvation offered as the saved who do not resist the grace. And those who do not resist, had just as much ability to resist as those who do. When the text says that we should compel them to come in from the highways and hedges of heathendom, it does not mean that physical force must be exercised. You cannot bring them in thus, if you would. Drag a man into church by force if you will, or induce him to confess Christ by threats of death if he do not, and you

have not yet brought him to the Supper, which is not eaten physically, but which is eaten by the soul for spiritual ends. And the soul you cannot force. You cannot force a man to have no pain when he holds his hand in the fire; you cannot shoot or cut into him the conviction that twice two are not four, or that white is black. The only constraint to be used in regard to the great Supper is the constraint of truth. Else how could our Savior say: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!" Luke 13, 34. They would not be gathered, and consequently they were not, though the Lord desired it. Those who will not are the only rejected ones, those who do not resist are the elect. The truth influences the soul and sets it free, where it is not wilfully resisted; and men are compelled to come to the Supper only in this sense, that the truth is told them again and again, until it leaves them no rest in their consciences, but constrains them to come to the Supper and be blest. O, that it thus constrained all who hear it by producing faith in them! But, alas! men still give in excuses as they did in the apostles' days.

III. The Excuses for not yielding obedience to the call are manifold, but we may still class the principal ones among those mentioned in our Gospel lesson.

1. *The duties of our earthly calling* are supposed to interfere with the acceptance of the heavenly invitation. "They all began with one consent to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused." This implies that the possession of property and the cares of its preservation and increase are inconsistent with the ac-

ceptance of an invitation to the riches of God's kingdom. It is an excuse that many make still, if not in the same words, at least in substance. They have house and land, and money and goods, and the complicated anxieties and cares which they make themselves about these, shut out all thoughts about the future and all proper care for their immortal souls. Well, brethren, if there were any truth in the implication upon which this excuse depends, the way of wisdom and duty would be very plain. If one of us supposed that having a piece of land or yokes of oxen, and the cares connected with them, disqualified us for attending to the interests of the soul, there is nothing simpler than to ascertain what we should do. The question would simply be: shall we let the soul sink to eternal ruin, or let the land and oxen go? If the soul, with its immortal powers and capacities, is worth less than the land, keep the land and let the soul perish. But if the soul is of greater worth than land and oxen, let these go and retain the soul for bliss everlasting. He must be a brutish man indeed who would have great difficulty in deciding this question.

But it may arise, and should, when it does arise, be promptly decided. There is a case of this kind recorded. A certain rich man asked our Lord what good thing he should do to inherit eternal life. This man was very strict in the outward observance of the law. But his riches were in his way: he clung to them: they were, after all, his god. The land and oxen were impediments in the way of his embracing the truth. Therefore our Savior's reply to his questions, of course, was this: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me." Matt. 19, 21. When such things do interfere, they, not the invitation, must be put out of the way. But they do not interfere in fact. These are fabricated excuses; and the

command to sell all and give it to the poor is intended to show that all is not right within. Land and oxen can be attended to just as well when the invitation is accepted as when it is rejected. Nay, they can be attended to a thousand-fold better. They need only be made subordinate to the higher interests of the soul, and all will be well. Attending to them will then be a part of that service which is rendered to the Master, at whose Supper we are so richly blest. Satan would have us believe we can attend only to one, either our heavenly or earthly calling. He would have us believe so, because our tendency is to grasp earth and let heaven go, if we take but one. If it were so that we can have but one, it is folly to choose time rather than eternity. But God commands both; they stand in complete harmony with each other. Come to the Supper, then in the great Master's name read and pray, till the land, work the oxen, and the blessing of the Master will rest upon you in body and soul, in time and eternity. The earthly calling is so far from being a hindrance to the heavenly, that it never can be rightly attended to without this. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." 1 Tim. 4, 8.

2. *Again, the cares of the family* are supposed to stand in conflict with the care of the soul, and to afford a valid excuse for neglecting the latter. In principle this is the same as the former. Because it is not good for man to be alone, and God therefore made a help meet for him, it is imagined that God will not be displeased if a man marries a wife and therefore thinks he cannot come to the Supper. But the inference is wholly mistaken—it is palpably false. If this were really an obstacle in the way of becoming a child of God, marriage would never be pleasing to God and would never have been allowed, much less represented as man's normal state in accordance with the

divine institution. Circumstances may occur in which it is best not to marry. Such a time was that in which the apostle, on account of the harassments to which the Christians were exposed, recommends temporary celibacy. But in such circumstances, which do not frequently occur, it is again plain what should be done, namely, remain single until the calamity be overpast. But circumstances never did occur, and never will, in which the matrimonial state is in itself inconsistent with Christianity—in which one could not marry a wife and still heed the call to the great Supper. Matrimony may, in times of persecution, increase the troubles of earth, on which account St. Paul, in such a case, recommended abstinence from it; but never can it, in itself, require a rejection of God's grace. The excuse is therefore merely an invention of Satan. His object is to lead men to the supposition that they may either marry or be saved, and his reliance is then upon human weakness, that some will rather marry. The truth is again, that both stand in perfect harmony. Heed the call, and bring thy wife with thee. Heed the call at any rate, and the family relation will be sanctified by it, and God's blessing will attend you in your homes, and in the duties and enjoyments which belong to your homes. All excuses are vain, and mostly are they known to be so by those who make them. The great reason for rejecting the call is given by our Lord when he says: "Ye *will* not come to me!"

IV. FINALLY, THE CONSEQUENCES resulting from the rejection of the call should be well considered, that they may influence our minds in opposition to the vain excuses Satan delights to suggest.

1. *The gifts are eternally lost when the call is rejected in time.* There is no way of gaining possession of the heavenly bounties with which the table is laden, without coming to the Supper and receiving them in the Lord's

appointed way If there were other tables spread by other kings, to which we could have access when one is closed against us, we might still have some consolation, even though the viands should be less choice. But there is no God beside our God, and another table cannot be spread for us. And if in another state of existence the same opportunity were afforded us which is graciously offered us here, there would again be some hope; for we might embrace the offer then which we foolishly despised before. But never will an opportunity again occur when this life is past. Our neglect in time bears consequences in eternity. And not only are we deprived by our negligence, by our folly, of heaven with all its untold, ineffable treasures and glories. Even this were tolerable compared with the results revealed in God's Word. It would be sad to be cut off from God and the bliss of His presence; but it would be sadder still, incomparably sadder, to be cast into outer darkness, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth—where no ray of light ever shines, no ray of hope can ever enter. Hopeless in darkness, forever despairing—God save us from such a fate as this, in mercy save us! But how can He save us if we will not be saved? This thought increases the woe of the sure consequences following rejection.

2. *Our perdition will be our own fault.* How awful the thought! In everlasting despair, and conscious all the while that it is our own deliberate choice! We were told before—we were reasoned with, and arts of persuasion were used, but we rejected all. We hear it now—we are reasoning together now—we know it well just now what will follow; for God, who cannot lie, tells us, tells us plainly. Must it be that one of us shall perish, and perish from our own free choice? Let it not be—O, let it not be! We are called to-day again: the Savior calls to-day as He has

often called before. We may be very unworthy—I know we are; but God calls not the righteous, but sinners to repentance. We have heard it: the poor, the maimed, the halt, the blind, the outcasts on highways and hedges—all are invited to come. Let all hear and be saved!

Dear Savior! draw reluctant hearts,
To Thee let sinners fly,
And take the bliss Thy love imparts,
And drink and never die! Amen.

Third Sunday after Trinity.

LUKE 15, 1–10.

Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. And He spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, does not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance. Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbors together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

Beloved in Christ Jesus our Savior!

God reveals His wrath against all unrighteousness of men. How could He do otherwise? He could not be the Holy One if He had any pleasure in sin or could in any way countenance it. The revelation of Himself is in fact the condemnation of all unholiness as the opposite of Himself. Therefore He is a consuming fire. There is no more reason to hope that sin will escape its penalty than that God will be dethroned. He lives and reigns; therefore unrighteousness must be crushed. But that does not imply that there is no hope for the sinner. Viewed merely in the light of the righteous law, enforced by the righteous Judge of all the earth, there is indeed no way

of escape for unrighteous men. Therefore the Scriptures expressly tell us that "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Rom. 3, 20. That which shows us our sin and pronounces condemnation on us because of the sin in us which it manifests, cannot deliver us from that condemnation. And yet there is hope for us all, sinners that we are and deserving of the death which is the wages of sin. That is the precious lesson which our text teaches us in the comforting announcement that

JESUS RECEIVETH SINNERS.

Into this blessed gospel proclamation let us look to-day. We shall consider 1. *The Reason*, 2. *The Condition*, and 3. *The Effect* of our Savior's reception of sinners.

I. Considering the fact that sin is opposition to God and sinners are at enmity with Him, there must be some reason why He who came from God, nay, who is the Eternal Son of God Himself, should receive those who, by the very declaration which He has made to men, are to be forever banished from His presence and doomed to the damnation of hell. Nothing could be more absurd than to seek such a reason in the doomed persons themselves. If the question were concerning men in a natural condition with yet a destiny to choose and in which they must decide whether they shall be servants of righteousness unto life or servants of sin unto death, there might be some semblance of reasonableness in the thought, that it will now depend on our own virtue and effort and merit whether we shall be accepted or rejected by the Lord of all. But that is not at all the case. We are born in sin. We are children of wrath by nature. We are condemned already. How then could there be any ground or reason in us why we should be received by the Savior and brought to the

joys of heaven, instead of being consigned to the miseries of hell. We have merited death and are already doomed, and the question now is about a way to escape our deserts. That desert is a matter already settled, and that can not be changed. So far as our power and merit are concerned we are lost and our condemnation is sealed. For a reason why Jesus receives sinners, as they do not deserve, and does not banish them to outer darkness as they do deserve, we must therefore look to Him, not to ourselves. And in Him we find it—in His mercy and in His merit.

1. In the first place, the reason lies in His infinite love and mercy. When the Pharisees and scribes murmured at Jesus that He received the publicans and sinners who drew near to hear Him, "He spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness and go after that which is lost until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost." "Either what woman, having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle and sweep the house and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbors together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost." That shows us what moves our loving Savior to receive sinners. They are His, and they are lost, and He loves them still. As a shepherd thinks of the poor sheep that has gone astray and is in imminent danger of falling a prey to the wolves or of perishing for want of food, and seeks it till he finds it, so the Savior pities men who have strayed away from God and His green pastures, and rendered themselves subject to the roaring lion that seeketh to devour and to spiritual starva-

tion in the barren wastes of the world. He loves them, and therefore seeks them, that they may not perish. Not because of the good that is in them, but because of the mercy that is in Him, does He follow the lost in their misery and seek to restore them. And that love is so intense that He is ready even to sacrifice His life to rescue the lost sheep and deliver it from its dreadful doom. "I am the good Shepherd," He tells us; "the good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep. But he that is a hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming and leaveth the sheep, and the wolf catcheth them and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep." John 10, 11–15. When there is such a Shepherd caring for the sheep, there is no difficulty in finding the reason for the concern which He manifests in saving the straying ones from the destruction to which they are hastening. He loves them and would save them: He would save them because He loves them. That is all. Not because they are good, or because they have merited anything good, but only because He loves them would He save them from their wretched fate. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John 4, 10. "God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." Rom. 5, 8. This boundless mercy of God toward lost men is the ground of all our hopes. He loved us unto death. Therefore does He receive wretched sinners and save them.

2. But the Savior's death was more than a manifestation of His love. It was the propitiation for our sins. Therefore does He receive sinners, because they are the

purchase of His blood. By the atonement which our Savior made was it rendered possible to receive sinners without violating righteousness, by which they are condemned. Therefore the merit of Christ is a second reason for the reception of sinners. If He had not fulfilled all righteousness for us and suffered the penalty of our sins, which is death, justice would not permit Him to receive us to grace and glory. He took our place, and was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. The great hindrance to our reception is thus removed, and a righteousness has been acquired by the Son of God in virtue of which we can stand before God. "Now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness; that He might be just and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Rom. 3, 21–26. The good Shepherd, by laying down His life for the sheep, acquired for them a righteousness which is not their own, but which avails for them as if they had acquired it. He did all that was demanded of us, and suffered all that was due to us on account of our transgression. This is the merit of Christ. He had no need to be put under the law except as our substitute, and His obedience is therefore a righteousness that can be imputed to us and set down to our account. The Lord did not need it for Himself: He lived and labored and suffered and died in fulfilment of all righteousness only for our sakes. In view of His merit,

of His acquired righteousness for our benefit, we can escape the penalty of our sins, which He has borne for us. Now He can be just without consigning sinners to their merited doom. Nothing is necessary now but faith, which trusts in the Savior's mercy and embraces the Savior's merit. Now God can be just and still be a justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. The sin that required the rejection of the sinner is taken away by the Lamb of God. That is the reason why Jesus receiveth sinners. His mercy moves Him to save them, and His merit removes all hindrances to the exercise of His mercy.

II. But there is still a condition under which the merit of Christ becomes the personal possession of individuals and the mercy of God attains its end in them. Not all men are received into the kingdom of God and made heirs of heaven. That is not because something is still needed on man's part to move God to be merciful. He is infinite in mercy and would save all men. Nor is there anything needed yet in addition to the merits of our Savior to render them effectual for the removal of any hindrances to the exercise of divine mercy. The redemption is perfect and is sufficient for all men. There can be no merit in man to supplement the merit of our Redeemer, and there is no need for any. And yet not all men are saved. That is not because some meritorious action or disposition is yet necessary to give efficacy to God's mercy and Christ's merit, but because God has made us rational beings and deals with us as such. He therefore does not apply force to bring men to heaven, but calls them by His Gospel and draws them by its power, which is sufficient for the salvation of all, but permits them to resist and reject it, if they will. By the power of divine grace souls are to be led to a knowledge of their sin and to faith in the Savior from sin. That is the only way in which the righteousness of Christ can be appropriated by the in-

dividual soul. That is the only means by which the sinner can be justified. In this sense we speak of it as a condition, just as the beggar's eating the food in charity placed before him is a condition of his being nourished, though no one imagines that there is any merit in eating. Christ received the sinners who came "for to hear Him," and tells us that there shall be joy in heaven "over one sinner that repenteth." If men will not repent they must perish in their sins. Repentance is the condition of being received into our Lord's kingdom of salvation.

1. This implies, in the first place, a knowledge of sin and a recognition of its deadly character. No one will flee for refuge to a hope set before him, unless he sees his danger. Sin blinds the understanding as well as corrupts the heart. The sinner therefore cannot see the depths of depravity in his own soul as readily as he sees the actions of men or the objects in nature. Not every man knows the wickedness that is in him. On the contrary, many under its blinding influence imagine themselves good men, as did the Pharisees of old and as do the Pharisees of our own day. Such men cannot be brought to despair of their own righteousness as long as they nurse the delusion that it is well with them. Therefore God gives us the law to expose our inner life to our own eye. He would have us see that there is nothing good in us, but that every imagination of the thoughts of our hearts is only evil continually. And not only that. He would have us see that this must end in everlasting death. Sin must bring misery. Where such a conviction is wrought, that the soul is full of sin and that sin is leading to destruction as surely as God is just, the case is hopeful. Not that such a knowledge of sin and such a dread of its consequences makes the heart any better, or forms any means of escape from condemnation. But feeling our misery and seeing the danger before us may be an inducement not to turn away

from any help that may be offered. That is what the apostle means when he says that "the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." Gal. 3, 24. Help is offered the sinner in the Gospel, so that he need not despair. When he believes he is safe.

2. Such faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom we have remission of sins, is implied in repentance. The sinner who truly repents, not only sees his misery and his danger and his helplessness, but also the mercy of God that comes to his rescue and the merit of Christ which is set before him for his appropriation by faith. He not only cries out in the agony of his soul, Woe is me, for I am a child of sin and death; but he trusts the assurance of the Gospel and cries, Lord, be merciful to me a sinner! The help that is offered is the help that is needed, and the offer is accepted as a deliverance from the horrors of hell. The apostle expresses it all when he says: "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom. 7, 24. 25. Feeling the weight of sin and recognizing the justice of the sentence pronounced upon the sinner, the penitent soul knows no refuge but in the mercy declared in the good tidings of Jesus, and seizes upon this with eagerness and joy as the one thing needful, as the pearl of great price. Such sinners Jesus receives, and will in no wise cast out. Though they be full of blemishes and utterly unworthy of the least of His blessings, He receives them gladly when they hear His voice and cry to Him; and though they be weak, He will not on that account despise them, but layeth them on His shoulders and beareth them home. Surely, we have a loving Lord and Savior who receiveth sinners.

Have you not, dear brethren, sometimes given way to doubts about the mercy of Jesus when sin oppressed you

sorely and its guilt and its curse stood in appalling blackness before your eyes? Is it not needful that we should again and again set the precious truth before our eyes, that Jesus receiveth sinners with an eager and earnest desire to save them? When you feel your burden of sin weighing heavily upon you, only go to Him; just such sinners He delights to receive. Only those who will not acknowledge their sin and feel no need of a Savior—only these are rejected. And these are not rejected because the Lord has no pity on them and no desire to deliver them from their wretchedness, but only because they will not come to Him that they might have life. They reject Him, and therefore stand rejected. But those who come to Him, poor and needy and helpless, but trusting in His mercy, He will receive, to comfort and to save.

III. The Effect of Christ's reception of sinners is very different on different persons. The Pharisees and scribes murmured, but there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

1. It seems strange, at first sight, that any man should murmur at the mercy of our Lord as shown in receiving sinners. But when the subject is further considered it will not seem surprising. These Pharisees pretended to have great respect for virtue and holiness. The law was, as a series of directions for right living, sacred in their eyes. One who did not honor the commandments and traditions and scrupulously observe them, did not seem to them fit company for the chosen people of God. The publicans were regarded as sinners in virtue of their calling. A pious publican, or tax-gatherer, seemed to them a contradiction in terms. To be a publican was in their eyes to be a sinner. Our Lord associated with these sinners, and even ate with them. In their fond conceit of themselves as the holy people, who would on no account keep company with such sinful men, it seemed to

them sufficient to condemn Jesus, that He was willing to pay any attention to these sinners and even to eat with them. Such people are incapable of comprehending the love which would condescend to help the lowly in their conscious helplessness. Moreover, there was an element of truth in their objection to such intercourse with sinners that gave their murmuring some semblance of justice. It *is* not right for those who love righteousness and earnestly seek holiness to live on terms of intimacy with those who despise all the claims of conscience. Therefore the psalmist says: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." Ps. 1, 1. It is always a bad indication when professed followers of Jesus delight in the association of men who merely make a mock of religion, or speak slightingly, if not scornfully, of the things which belong to our peace. Those who love the Lord should not find pleasure in the company of those who hate Him. When men love wickedness and pursue it in spite of all remonstrances and entreaties, one cannot keep company with them without being contaminated, and one cannot seek such company without first having become indifferent to the requirements of holiness. This much of truth there is in the view which was expressed by the murmuring of the Pharisees and scribes. But this does not prove that they were right. They were wrong, utterly wrong. But their error did not lie in their repugnance to association with wicked men. That is only commendable. It lay in their self-righteous inability to appreciate the difference between a penitent sinner and one that is impenitent. Our Lord turned away from men that despised the call of grace, and commanded His disciples to turn away from them. "Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them." Mark 6, 11. But

here were sinners who were willing to hear our Lord. And He had intercourse with them because they were willing to hear Him and learn the way of salvation. They were poor sinners who by the Word which Jesus preached were made willing to learn of Him. It would be uncharitableness, it would be cruelty to turn away from such sinners, who did not renounce the salvation which had come. The merciful Savior received them, and was ready to help them and to bless them, though unmerciful Pharisees, who had no knowledge of sin and of repentance of sin, but entertained vain thoughts of a righteousness which they did not possess, murmured at the mercy which would deliver poor souls from their misery. Alas for the professed godliness that has no mercy for sinners!

2. But while the Pharisees murmured there was joy in heaven over the repenting sinner. So far is the receiving of sinners from being a cause of complaint to the good that it is a source of special gratulation. "Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance," says our Lord. There may be a glance in this at the self-righteousness of the Pharisees and an implied rebuke, as though He would say: Ye holy ones murmur at my receiving these poor sinners, but in heaven there is more joy over one such sinner than over all you Pharisees and scribes who think that you need no repentance. That is certainly true. But that is not what the words express; at least it is not all that the words express. They point out the fact that the finding of a lost soul is a cause of joy in addition to the happiness caused by the knowledge that souls are safe. The shepherd who loves one of his hundred sheep does not cease to prize the ninety and nine that are left and to find delight in their possession and their safety, but he regards with special solicitude the one that is lost. That engages his attention most. And when

his efforts to recover the lost are successful, he has special joy in finding it. When a woman who has ten pieces of silver loses one of them she does not prize less the nine that are left, but her mind dwells more on the one that is lost, and when she finds it, that affords her special joy. The lost is found; that is the occasion of calling in the neighbors to rejoice with the happy finder. So when a poor sinner returns from his wandering and ceases to spurn the grace by which alone he can have peace here and blessedness hereafter, there is joy in heaven over the finding. The very angels rejoice that the lost is found. There is joy over all the saved. There is constant rejoicing over the ninety and nine just persons who have been rescued from death and are now safe in the Redeemer's kingdom under the protection and guidance of His grace. But there is additional joy when a poor sinner is added to the fold and the lost is found. Proud self-righteousness that cannot appreciate the grace which saves the unworthy, and has no pity for the lost and no sympathy with the contrite, may murmur at the mercy of the Savior who stoops to lift up the broken-hearted, helpless sinner, but all heaven is jubilant when such love is shown to men and brings the poor lost soul home to God.

As we gaze anew to-day upon the loving kindness of our Savior, who came to seek and to save that which was lost, and who looks with infinite pity upon the souls that are perishing and stretches forth His loving arms to receive all who do not reject His proffered help, should we not be incited anew to adore His mercy and magnify His grace? And should we not see, as we contemplate the marvelous manifestations of condescending love, ever new incentives to trust in Him who is so willing and so ready and so mighty to save? Our hearts are but too prone to listen to the tempter's voice, instead of hearkening to the assuring and consoling words of Him who loved us unto

death. Jesus receiveth sinners: let not your hearts be troubled neither be afraid. Only trust His love; your confidence shall never be put to shame. And while you adore the mighty Savior and put your trust in His mercy, let that mercy lead you to be merciful also. There are millions perishing yet, and we too are to be workers together with Him in dispensing the mercy which saves. To this end He has committed to us the means of grace. Shall they not be more widely and more earnestly used to bring sinners to repentance? The Lord give us loving hearts to share the joy of heaven over sinners that repent. Amen.

Fourth Sunday after Trinity.

LUKE 6, 36–42.

Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again. And He spake a parable unto them: Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch? The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.

Dear Brethren:

God's mercy is great and endureth for ever. That is the great comfort of our text. It requires us to be merciful, but it points first of all to the mercy of God, and presents that to us as our pattern. "The Lord thy God is a merciful God; He will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers, which He swore unto them." Deut. 4, 31. "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide, neither will He keep His anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him." Ps. 103, 8–11. Taught by that mercy, we are to be merciful to others. "Be ye therefore

merciful as your Father also is merciful." Of Him we are to learn, not of men, who know something of love to their friends, but find nothing reasonable in love to their enemies. "He spake a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch? The disciple is not above his master, but every one that is perfect shall be as his master." If you take men for your teachers and models, you will at best reach the imperfect standard which humanity presents; but if you learn of Jesus you will have a perfect Guide. And He offers the grace which alone can enable us to love the Father and appreciate His mercy, that it may be looked up to as an example worthy of imitation. Therefore hear His exhortation:

BE YE MERCIFUL AS YOUR FATHER IS MERCIFUL.

Children should be like their Father. Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. Therefore live as children, and show mercy as God shows mercy. This implies four distinct exhortations which are expressed in our text: 1. *Judge not;* 2. *Condemn not;* 3. *Forgive;* 4. *Give.*

I. "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged." We must first inquire into the meaning of this exhortation, and then consider the promise annexed.

1. It is needful to inquire into the meaning of our Lord's words forbidding us to judge, because they do not seem in accord with commands given us in other places of Scripture. We shall find, upon such inquiry, that all the words of God are in perfect harmony with each other, but it behooves us to look into them, comparing Scripture with Scripture, that we may not misinterpret them and thus make them seem contradictory.

We certainly would misunderstand our Lord's words if we regarded them as forbidding us the exercise of all judgment, whatever the object may be upon which our thoughts are employed, or whatever our calling may be among our fellow-men; for we are quite sure, on the authority of God's own Word, that there are cases in which it is not only our right, but our solemn duty to pronounce judgment. The Lord commands rulers to judge righteously, as Moses was appointed to judge in Israel. And also in the Church the duty is enjoined. "I speak to your shame," says the apostle. "Is it so that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers." 1 Cor. 6, 5, 6. Differences can not be settled without deciding what and who is right and what and who is wrong. Both in Church and State such judgment is necessary to maintain the right and secure justice between man and man. And especially in regard to doctrine is it necessary to judge. Applying the Scriptures as the test, we must discriminate between truth and error, otherwise we would fall a prey to the wolves who come to us in sheep's clothing. Hence St. Paul says, "I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say." 1 Cor. 10, 15. Hence the Bereans were commended as "more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so." Acts 17, 11. No one could be secure against the false doctrines which are promulgated, unless he exercised judgment to distinguish between truth and error. In some instances and in some respects we are not only not forbidden, but are commanded to judge.

All the more needful is it to ascertain from the Scriptures what is meant to be prohibited when our Lord says, "Judge not." Nor is that so difficult as it might seem

before we examine the subject. God is our judge, not man. In that we find the key to the seeming contradiction. When God has declared His judgment, the matter is decided. He has revealed the truth in His Word and gives us this Word for our guidance. The judgment there announced we are to accept in faith, and in this faith to shun all human opinions that are offered as substitutes for revealed truth or as additions or amendments. By the Scriptures we must therefore test all doctrines. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them." Isa. 8, 20. God alone gives the saving truth, and we have no light and no power to judge that. He alone is Judge of what is true and what is necessary. But when men teach these doctrines we must judge by the revealed decision of God whether their doctrine is in accord with that decision, taking the plain sense of the words as our guide and comparing Scripture with Scripture. Our judgment thus simply results in a vigilant and reverent solicitude to ascertain God's judgment, which is not to be judged, but humbly accepted. But as to men and their relation to God the divine judgment is not revealed, and only so far as they themselves make known their internal condition have we a right to form any judgment. We cannot see into the hearts of men, and it is bold presumption and irreverent intermeddling with God's prerogative to decide what is in them. Only the manifestations of their intents and thoughts are open to us, and these are to be judged again by the declarations of God in the Scriptures, not by any independent judgment of ours; in other words, God is judge, and all that we can do is to apply what He has revealed to what men reveal of themselves by their actions. Thus in life as in doctrine man is not the judge, although he must apply the revealed will of Him who is Judge for the preservation of truth and righteousness.

Accordingly the mercy which we are taught to exercise will not pronounce judgments at the dangerous risk of conflicting with the merciful judgment of God. It will not impute to others wicked thoughts and intentions and thus place them under God's condemnation, when their actions do not necessarily imply such wickedness, but are capable of a good interpretation in charity, and may thus be placed under God's mercy. It will not heartlessly magnify the faults of other men and doom them to destruction, though our merciful Father has not doomed them, or at least has not enabled us to know that He has doomed them, while we are guilty of greater faults and do not think of applying the same uncharitable rule to ourselves. "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceiveth not the beam that is in thine own eye? Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye." That assuredly does not mean that no man who is himself a sinner has any right to admonish his fellow-men. If that were the meaning all admonition and all discipline would be impossible, because all are sinners. But it does mean that as long as you have not believed the love which God hath to us and have not by His mercy learned to be merciful to others, you have no calling to help struggling souls in their conflicts with sin. Go first and cast out the beam of malice and all uncharitableness out of your own eye, so that you may see clearly and be helpful to your brother in removing the mote that troubles him. Be merciful, as your Father is merciful; then you will lay aside the harshness and cruelty of selfishness, and treat your erring brother charitably and tenderly. Such mercy will not accept as true

every tale that is told to the injury of another's good name, but will wait for the evidence, and meantime put the best construction on everything. Keep in view the mercy of God which is your only hope and refuge in Christ, and while you learn of Him what mercy means, you will understand the command, "Judge not," and leave all judgment to your merciful Father.

2. No man has such mercy by nature. "The heart is deceitful and desperately wicked." "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts." Therefore every man is naturally inclined to judge others, and of course to judge others uncharitably, not according to the mercy of our Father in heaven. Our Lord enforces the command not to judge by adding, "And ye shall not be judged." Apparently that is an appeal to our self-interest. It will be of advantage to ourselves to avoid judging, because in that way we shall escape being judged. But that is only looking upon the surface of things. It is true that all godliness is profitable. We shall not fail to derive benefit ourselves from the mercy which does not judge others. But it is not said and is not implied, nor is it true, that men are made charitable and prevented from judging by any considerations of profit to themselves. Such considerations will aid in the exercise of mercy when the heart is once merciful. They will aid us in directing attention to the movements of the flesh, which are adverse to our own happiness as well as to the mind of the Spirit. But the words of our Lord go deeper. They contain the promise that those who become the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus shall escape the judgment pronounced upon sin. They are rendered merciful by the grace of God through faith in the Savior of the world. Otherwise they may do acts of seeming mercy, but never are merciful. Only then will they be content that God alone should be the Judge of men, as only then they will trust in His mercy. And then the

exercise of the mercy which results from the apprehension of God's mercy and which takes this mercy as its model, will secure to us exemption also from the judgments of others. As the believer escapes the divine judgment by trusting the divine mercy in a crucified Savior, so he wins friends among men, who will generally not treat those harshly who treat them tenderly. "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged."

II. The second rule of mercy is contained in the words: "Condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned." As substantially the same explanations apply here as in the first rule, we can be more brief in considering it.

1. Certainly the meaning of our Lord is not that Christians must condemn nothing. That would be inconsistent with the requirement made upon us to hate sin and denounce it. Even persons cannot remain uncondemned when they are leagued with sin and will not be separated from it. St. Paul says: "Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." Gal. 1, 8. And our Lord commands us respecting the offender who has been admonished in vain: "If he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Matt. 17, 17. 18. We are forbidden to tolerate false doctrine or allow sin any rights or claims in the Church of God, because that would be dishonoring to our Lord and dangerous to our souls. False teaching and all unrighteousness can only be condemned: it must not be tolerated, much less justified or admitted to an equality with truth and righteousness. And yet our Lord commands us not to condemn. Evidently the design is to forbid all condemnation that has no regard for God and His mercy, and

that has its root simply in the will of man. We are not lords; we are merely servants. God alone has power to condemn, as He alone has power to save. Men must not arrogate to themselves divine power. They cannot consign to hell at pleasure. They can condemn only what God has condemned, and they have no right to pronounce condemnation where they cannot show that they are only accepting the condemnation which God has pronounced and acting upon it as a reality. Hence while in loyalty to their Lord they condemn what He has condemned, and thus denounce all false doctrine and all men who wilfully uphold false doctrine and by it manifest their disloyalty to the King of saints, they never condemn those who are not shown to be condemned of God, as if they had any independent right or power of condemnation. Accordingly they cannot condemn those who are innocent, because God does not condemn them. But neither can they condemn those who, though they are guilty, are either ignorant and have no design to transgress, or are penitent, and have no design to remain trangressors; for in both cases God has not condemned. God shows mercy to sinners, giving them needful light and pardoning them for Christ's sake when they repent. Take heed that ye condemn not, and thus put yourselves in opposition to God. "Be ye merciful as your Father in heaven is merciful." Where He condemns it is merciful to accept the decree, and not to treat it as inefficacious and void; where He does not condemn or does not make known His condemnation, it is as arrogant as it is unmerciful to usurp His power and presume to condemn.

2. "Condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned." Here too it must be observed that while the reference is to the relations between man and man, and the fact is declared that those who are merciful towards others will generally receive mercy at their hands, there is a more

important truth underlying it. Condemnation provokes condemnation. If you curse others they will be likely to curse you. Men will usually stand on the defensive and resent what seems to them a wrong. Condemn not and you will not arouse that spirit of resentment. On the other hand, acts of kindness appeal to the sense of gratitude, and will turn away wrath. It is therefore a suggestion of prudence not to condemn. But that is not strictly mercy according to the pattern of God's mercy. The heart may be unmerciful notwithstanding such suppression of unmerciful acts from motives of policy. That mercy which protects us against the condemnation here forbidden is a fruit of the Spirit. Only God can make the selfish heart merciful; only His Spirit removes the arrogance and uncharitableness which condemns where God has not condemned. But where by divine grace the heart has been renewed after the image of the Creator, it has been converted to Christ and has laid hold of His righteousness by faith. Then only it will earnestly refrain from unjust and uncharitable condemning, and escape being condemned by men who feel themselves wronged by manifestations of unmercifulness; but then too it will escape the curse which is upon us because of sin and will not be condemned before God. "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Rom. 8, 1. If you have the faith which moves you to resist the flesh in its sinful impulses to condemn, you have the means also by which the perfect righteousness of Jesus is embraced, on account of which you shall escape the condemnation which your sins deserve. The Lord's promise, "Ye shall not be condemned," is thus not merely a consideration urging us to refrain from the manifestation of unmercifulness in condemning others, though as against the impulses of the flesh it is this also, but the ground upon which all genuine mercy after the

model of our Father's mercy rests. Christian hearts are purified by faith. That alone renders them truly merciful and removes the evil desire to condemn, and that clings to the merits of Christ so that we shall not be condemned.

III. In the third place, the exhortation to be merciful as our Father also is merciful implies, that we should forgive others as God in mercy forgives us. "Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven." We must here also direct attention to the duty enjoined and to the promise given.

1. The duty of forgiving those who wrong or injure us is repeated so often in Scripture that no reader has any excuse for entertaining doubts about it. As against the law of retaliation which passion suggests and blind reason sanctions, our Lord declares: "But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you." Luke 6, 27. 28. Through the whole teaching of our Lord the spirit of love is apparent, which tenderly serves and patiently bears; and he who is led by the Spirit of Christ cannot so far be implacable or refuse to forgive a penitent foe, though injuries be oft repeated. "Then came Peter to him and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times, but, Until seventy times seven." Matt. 18, 21. 22. That seems hard. The natural mind cannot be expected to find delight in it when the occasion comes to practice it. Reason will be sure to find an apology for rejecting it. What good can come of trusting a person again who has seven times, and more, disappointed our trust? What ground can there be for hope when a person has, even supposing that he did not intentionally deceive us, again and again shown himself so weak, if not so wicked, as to render it certain that all hope would be put to shame? Would not such misplaced confidence in good

professions only strengthen the evil and give the evil-doer enlarged facilities for practicing his arts? So it seems to our flesh. But "if ye live after the flesh ye shall die." The selfishness which is natural to us in our sinful condition must be overcome by the grace of God. We must be born again. Then things will seem different to us. Our Lord's words will then not appear unreasonable: "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Matt. 5, 23. 24. The mercy which the Holy Spirit works in the hearts of men when He renders them children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, seeks reconciliation with foes and peace with all men. Therefore the apostle writes: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice, and be ye kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Eph. 4, 30–32.

2. There is a promise annexed to the command. "Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven." It would not be according to the proportion of faith to understand this as saying that our forgiveness of our fellow-men would form a motive in God inducing Him to forgive us. It is a contradiction to say that God forgives us because we are so good, as that would mean that He forgives us because we need no forgiveness. "God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you," not for your supposed merit's sake. But neither would it be bringing out the full meaning of the words if we asserted that they have no reference at all to God's forgiveness, but mean only that when we forgive others they will be moved also to forgive us. Unquestionably such influence is exerted on our fellow-men by a for-

giving spirit. Implacableness will provoke hostility, and men will not forgive faults when the offender shows himself cruel and unwilling to pardon any offence against him. On the other hand, a peaceable and forgiving spirit appeals to the grace that may exist in other hearts and thus moves them to forgive the forgiving. But the words mean more. They do refer to God also. They assure us that the mercy which forgives others is evidence that the heart is in a state of faith which apprehends God's forgiveness. They tell us that where there is a forgiving spirit the Holy Spirit has wrought it, and that there is a believer who receives God's forgiveness richly and daily. If you forgive not, it is because you are yet in your sins, and in such condition you have no forgiveness; if you forgive, it is because God has purified your hearts by faith, and in such condition you shall be forgiven. Apply this test in your lives, my brethren. Be assured that the grace of God renders the soul ready to forgive, and that when by grace we forgive, God will continue for Christ's sake to forgive us. His mercy makes us merciful and renders us daily recipients of mercy unto eternal life.

IV. Finally, we are commanded in mercy to give as well as to forgive. "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."

1. The subject of giving is not pleasant to some people. Unhappily there are some even in Christian congregations who dislike the subject. Is there to be no end to this begging, some ask, to this everlasting begging? Must we be giving all the time? they say, with an appeal which they expect reason to sanction; must we be forever giving, and when we have given be immediately asked to give again? And everywhere such rational argumentation

wins applause, and so-called begging is tacitly, if not loudly, proclaimed an evil that must be put down. All the more is it necessary to speak plain words on the matter.

In the first place, if any one does not want to give anything to God or man, no man will or can compel him to give anything. Human law recognizes your property as your own, and its management according to the desire of your own heart will not be interfered with. On that score you can make no just complaint. But if you want to be your own lord and master, and are determined to use all for yourself, without any regard to other's welfare or other's woe, do not imagine that you are a Christian. That would be the most miserable self-deception. One that will not recognize Christ to be the Lord is not in the kingdom over which He rules. But let not such a niggardly soul imagine that because he is not a Christian he will be exempt from the requirements which He makes who rules as King in Zion. You deceive yourselves when you suppose that Christ will not judge those who refuse to enter His kingdom. The earth is the Lord's, and if you use His property against His will, you must answer for it on the judgment day. That you are not a Christian will then be your damnation. For believers there is hope, because the blood of Jesus cleanseth them; for unbelievers there is no hope, for they have no Savior.

In the second place, if any one who believes in Jesus is yet so deficient in knowledge as to imagine that too much is asked of him, let him know that every cent and every dollar which he possesses is God's, and that God is merciful when he lets him have his daily bread, even if every cent beyond this were demanded for the poor and for the Church. He who owns all things, and gives in mercy to you that you may be His servant and have the honor of working together with Him, will not cease asking you to give. He never will. Neither will He make any

kind of a compromise with you. He will not resign one jot or tittle of His right in all your property. If you will not own Him to be Lord of all, so much the worse for you; but Lord of all He will remain. He will not force you to give, but He will force you to appear before His judgment bar when the time of your probation is past. Do not think then of a time coming when you need no longer be subject to the Lord. All you have is His, and you are on trial as to how you use it. Of your stewardship you must give account. See to it that you quit grumbling against the Master; and learn that He is merely using His right when He asks you to give, and that He is not a poor beggar to whom you can give a crust that you do not want, but the owner of all you have, who will soon call you to give an account of your stewardship.

In the third place, there is a blessedness in giving which all who know their gracious Lord and are in harmony with His thoughts and purposes, realize and appreciate. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." See that you learn this. The Lord distributes gifts among His people, and His Spirit moves them to use these gifts according to His good will. The more the sincere Christian can do in such use of gifts the happier he is. He appreciates the blessed privilege of being a dispenser of divine blessings. This let us learn and experience, and there will be more blessedness among us because more giving.

2. That blessedness will consist not only in the joy of giving and of thus executing our merciful Father's will, but also in the increased measure of gifts entrusted to us. Men will give cheerfully to those who have been cheerful givers. But God also gives largely to those who are faithful in that which His mercy has committed to their care. "This I say," writes St. Paul, "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly, and he which soweth boun-

tifully shall reap also bountifully." 2. Cor. 9, 6. The Lord rules. He directs all the affairs of the universe. Gifts are distributed as seems to Him good. And He has secured us by His promises against any losses and disabilities that might seem to rise from liberal giving. It shall not be a cause of suffering to us. On the contrary, it shall be a source of profit. The joy and blessedness of giving shall be ours, and God will provide that the liberal soul shall be made fat, for He has pledged His Word to that effect. Therefore "give, and it shall be given unto you." The providence of God will so direct all that the cheerful giver shall be blessed in his deeds both in time and in eternity.

Dear brethren, let us give earnest heed to these ininstructions of our Lord, which are designed for our good as well as for the good of our fellow-men. Let the Holy Spirit have His way and work in your hearts. He will bring you to Christ and keep you in fellowship with Him, that you may be merciful as your Father is merciful, not judging and condemning, but forgiving and giving, and thus hallowing His great name and doing His holy will. May His grace accomplish this. Amen.

Fifth Sunday after Trinity.

LUKE 5, 1–11.

And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon Him to hear the Word of God, He stood by the lake of Gennessaret, and saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And He entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust a little from the land. And He sat down, and taught the people out of the ship. Now when He had left speaking, He said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto Him; Master, we have toiled all the night and have taken nothing: nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes they had taken: and so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed Him.

Dear Brethren:

The Word of God is a treasure whose value cannot be easily overrated. It contains the cheering promise of everlasting life, and reveals the conditions upon which we can claim the promise. It is thus our lamp of life, shining upon our path and indicating the way all our journey through. And this not only with reference to spiritual matters. It is designed to be our guide in all things. For the service of God which it teaches does not consist in occasional isolated acts, or the performance of certain duties occupying a small portion of our time. This would

be a service of something else, with the appropriation of the hours of leisure to God. It consists in owning God as King in all things and devoting all our powers to Him. But this must involve our temporal employments as well as our spiritual life. This is what we desire especially to impress upon our minds to-day, in accordance with our text. Our subject therefore is

LABOR IN OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S WORD.

In considering this we will notice these three points: 1. *That we should do all at God's Word;* 2. *That doing so we can expect the divine blessing;* and 3. *That the divine blessing should lead us to repentance.*

I. WE SHOULD DO ALL THINGS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE DIVINE WORD, according to Peter's example: "At Thy Word I will let down the net." Not our will, but the will of our Lord is to be done in all things. Accordingly the Lord's Word, not our sinful heart, must be our guide.

1. *We must not let reason rise against the Word.* It is prone to do this, and sometimes it would almost seem an absurdity to resist it. But it has no business to speak where God's Word has already spoken, and that decisively. Reason should be honored within its own province, but deserves no honor when it meddles with things beyond its reach. It was not given us to shed light upon things eternal and to lead to their attainment. It knows nothing of spiritual things or of the way to attain them. These are made known by revelation, and whoever departs from it and trusts in his own natural light, will grope in darkness. "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." Prov. 28, 26.

If we would be wise, we must meekly hear while God speaks by His Word. Even as regards temporal things we must not let reason decide where revelation has spoken. When God has told us what works are pleas-

ing in His sight, reason has no right to substitute other works, which He has not commanded.

Reason might have objected in the case mentioned in our text, indeed did object, though Peter refused to hear it, that after toiling all the night and taking nothing it would be perfectly useless to let down the nets again, now that the morning was approaching. The probabilities seemed strongly against the hope of taking fish now: the night was spent in vain, and perhaps the worst time was just then. Human thinking discourages such labor; and yet the word of the Lord was there, "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught;" and Peter obeyed, notwithstanding the expostulation of his judgment. "Simon answering said unto Him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and taken nothing: nevertheless at Thy Word I will let down the net." It is consummate folly to heed reason's voice, when it is speaking beyond its province, and standing thus in the way of God's Word.

So reason still speaks against the Word now, and but too often it is not resisted and put in subordination to the voice of God, as was done in St. Peter's case. Thus frequently, when the Word tells us to be diligent in our business, performing the duties of our calling faithfully and trusting in the Lord for the supply of all our wants, the sinful heart will raise objections founded upon experience. For often persons labor diligently for years, and yet never attain affluence, in some cases scarcely obtain a competence. Why labor on at this rate? The reply must be, that at Jesus' Word we must cast out our nets, no matter what the experience of the night has been; and if we do not become rich by practicing the duties of our calling, we ought to remember that it is not designed that every person should be rich, but it is required that every person

should do his duty and be contented, though they have no more than food and raiment. Some are always dissatisfied, and complain of having taken nothing, when their business is not as profitable as that of some of their neighbors. They are a discontented class, whom it would be difficult to please by any means. Their great fault is that they do not labor in obedience to God's Word, and are therefore not content with God's gifts, but labor rather to please their own ambition for wealth or honor, and are consequently not satisfied when these are not obtained. The cure for such an evil is faith in Jesus' name, that we may thus be induced to labor at His Word with confidence in His care.

2. *We must pursue the way of our calling in reliance upon Jesus' Word.* To do this we must first of all be assured that we have an honorable calling—a calling that is useful to the community and pleasing to God. Every man should have some business, some profession: an idler, who has nothing to do, and whose time always hangs upon him as a heavy burden, is not walking acceptably to God, whatever good qualities he may possess aside from this. All should have a calling, and thus aid in supplying some want of the community; for we all have need of each other, the talents and gifts being so distributed among men that the cooperation of all is needed for the common good. But the calling must be one that accords with God's Word—one that we know to be useful to men and that we can pursue with a good conscience, in the consciousness that our time and talent is not wasted, much less that they are spent in spreading mischief and ruin around. Being certain that our profession is honorable, and that by it we are contributing something to the comfort and convenience of our fellow men according to God's will, we should next see to it, that we are faithful in the discharge of its duties, and that our idleness or negli-

gence does not prevent our success in business. And if we always set about our work in the name of the Lord, and at His Word let down our net, success will always be ours. We shall serve our fellow-men, at the Lord's word, though we may have nothing more than the necessaries of life. And these ought to suffice. Never should we suppose that a change of calling is necessary because we are not becoming wealthy. At Jesus' word let us go to work, and whether little or much is obtained as the result of our labor, it will be obtained in the right way and we can be content: enough it will be in any case; and what seems to our Lord enough should seem enough also to us. Toil on in your vocation, though you so often seem to toil in vain.

3. *We must perceive the works of our calling to be really good works.* What is done at the Lord's word cannot be otherwise than good. To read the Bible, or go to church, or pray, will pass with many for good works; perhaps also to fast, to mortify the flesh by self-imposed burdens, which is falsely called bearing the cross, or to go upon a weary pilgrimage; but it seems ludicrous even to some Christians to speak of plowing the fields, or selling goods, or keeping accounts, or making shoes, or washing dishes, as good works. And yet the latter are such whilst the self-imposed tasks are not. What else is a good work but that which God commands and is done in Jesus' name? Its conformity to God's will renders it good. It is therefore a good work to pray and give alms, as He has commanded these; but it is a good work just as well to work with our heads or hands in our earthly calling in His name; for this too has He commanded. It is not a good work, but one of mere indifference, and when it interferes with the performance of duty, an evil work, to go on a pilgrimage or punish one's self with fastings. Our whole life is to be made up of good works; and it is only evil when persons so narrow down the definition of good

works as to make it seem that a person ought to neglect his business for the sake of serving God. Minding one's business is serving God. Not only is it pleasing to God when the mechanic has pious thoughts whilst engaged in his daily toil: the daily toil is itself pleasing to Him, if done at His word. It is about as easy to conceive of a Christian who never prays and goes to church, or never gives anything to its support, as it is of one who "walks disorderly, working not at all, but is a busy-body." 2 Thess. 3, 11. For He who has commanded us to pray and to give, has also said that "with quietness we should work and eat our own bread." 2 Thess. 3, 12. Therefore at Jesus' word let us do our work, and recognize every work as good that is done in faith in accordance with the Word.

II. While we work at Jesus' Word we may expect His blessing. The Master whom we serve will provide for us. His blessing will be ours in time and in eternity.

1. *We shall have our temporal wants supplied.* The blessing sometimes tarries long, but it never fails. Many a person carries on a business which scarcely seems to afford a livelihood; and sometimes, when business has for a while been prosperous, reverses come, and the profits of years seem at once to be lost again. Then the unbelieving, and even believers in the weakness of faith, are disposed to murmur against the Ruler of all, or to doubt His providence. And some, when they succeed so little to their taste, instead of praying more and being still more "diligent in business, serving the Lord," drop their calling in ungrateful doubt, and cast themselves upon the world, to be drifted whithersoever the tide may flow, while others, in the same unbelief, seek a competence or wealth in another profession, which seems more remunerative. The believer, on the other hand, at his Master's word casts out his net again, leaving it to his Master to decide whether he shall have much or little, and is satisfied with

whatever it pleases Him to bestow. For the promise is clear and sure that those who trust in God shall have their daily bread, and no Christian can deny the Father's Word, of whom he daily asks that bread. The frequent shifting from one calling to another, and from one place to another, in search of pecuniary advantage, is but one of the many indications prevalent in our day of want of confidence in God's guidance and government, and of men's foolish thoughts of independence even of God and dependence wholly upon self. If men were convinced that their calling is good and useful, and had any trust in God, they would pursue it until Providence pointed out another to them as better suited to their talents—pursue it until the end, if this please God, amid every discouragement that poverty could bring, always knowing that if poverty fall to their lot, God is with them still, and that He whom they seek faithfully to serve will not forsake them. He has given us His word: "Trust in the Lord and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." Ps. 37, 3. Thus, too,

2. *We have comfort in the trials of our calling.* Every calling has such trials. Sometimes poverty stares us grimly in the face; sometimes seeming want of success weighs heavily upon the mind; sometimes exposure to hardships and even jeopardy of life causes pain. But whatever it may be that causes it, trouble will come in some form. While we serve the Lord and labor at His Word we have this strong consolation, that we are not choosing our own path, that we are not rebelling against our God who is pleased to guide us, that we are doing His will and working out His purposes. And it is none the less a consolation because God has permitted trouble to come, while He directed our footsteps. Trouble is not in itself an evil; "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." God "makes all things work together for good to them

that love Him," and therefore whether joy or sorrow come it will tend to good in the Christian. So we need have no gnawing cares about the future. God will provide. He knows best what measure of goods it is well for us to have, and this measure He will always bestow. Nor need we fear that He will forsake us when we become old and gray-headed. "Trust in the Lord, and verily thou shalt be fed;" and every suffering which comes in the way of your calling He will help you to bear, until your time of probation is past, when, if only you have been a faithful servant, He will receive you to glory.

3. *We shall have eternal happiness in the future world.* Not of course because we have labored in an earthly calling and have had grace to be in some degree faithful. Eternal life is never given as a reward for human labors, whether they be in the heavenly or earthly calling, but is always a gift of grace: "not of works, lest any man should boast." But while it is not purchased by our works, but only by Jesus' blood, and is therefore given by grace, not by merit, it is still given only to those who, by the grace bestowed, serve God in their life here below, and become thus meet to serve Him in the everlasting life above. For the faith which trusts in God, according to His promises in all respects, is of course the faith also which clings to Jesus as the Savior, and he who will not have confidence in the Lord in temporal things, how could he have the full assurance of hope in things spiritual, which are unseen, and which we have nothing but the divine promise to assure us of—the same promise which certifies that we shall not want, because the Lord is our Shepherd? Those who trust in the Lord have therefore temporal sustenance and comfort, and also eternal life as the gift of God through our Lord Jesus Christ. But one thing more is evident from our text.

III. The blessing of God should lead us to re-

PENTANCE. When Peter saw how all his doubts were put to shame by the wonderful draught of fishes, he was ashamed "and fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." So should we let God's mercy humble us.

1. *We should see our unworthiness.* Peter saw at once how very great and how very good is Jesus, about whose command doubts had arisen in his mind; and in contrast with this greatness and goodness he saw how very poor and wicked he was himself. Under the influence of this deep sense of his unworthiness he desired the Lord to depart, because He seems too great and good to be in company with such a sinner. But do we not often, my brethren, have such manifestations of God's might and mercy before our eyes? And do we allow them to disclose to us our own littleness and sinfulness? Day by day this Lord has fed us according to His Word, and night by night He has shielded and protected us according to His mercy. None can say, however hard has been his lot and however little of success may have crowned his labors in his calling, that his daily bread has been wanting. The Lord has been good to us all. And yet how many are there among us who, instead of feeling overwhelmed by such unmerited mercy, rather act as though they had deserved more! Nay, some even complain when the divine gifts hang not in heavy clusters around them! Brethren, let it not be so among us; when God manifests His goodness in granting to us the necessaries and conveniences of life, and even many of its enjoyments, let us realize His goodness, and own our unworthiness. But especially should this be the case in view of His spiritual gifts, which are numberless and ineffably great. When I think of my sinfulness in nature and life, my ingratitude for gifts bestowed, my negligence when God has called, and then of Jesus condescending to bleed and die for me, even for me,

surely it would be natural to say: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." But whilst we feel our unworthiness, we should not be disheartened.

2. *We should confide in Him still.* The words of Peter are not meant to declare that He desired not the Savior's aid. It is the same feeling which the centurion expressed when he said: "Speak the word, Lord; for I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof." It is the deep humility finding vent in words; it is the overwhelming feeling of unworthiness, to which it seems as though it could not be that one so good should tarry with one so mean. But this humility implies, by no means excludes, confidence in Him and the desire for His continued aid. For while we know ourselves so mean and unworthy, we know ourselves so weak and helpless also. Our sin comes up before us, and with it our need of help. God's goodness would lead us to despair if it led us to see only our worthlessness. It leads us to see God in His goodness supplying the wants of man in His wickedness. Whilst we see our meanness, we see also that God does not spurn us and scorn us in our sin, but is ever ready to bless. This impels us, ashamed of our doubts and distrusts, to lean still more fully upon Him for aid, and to rely upon His kind promises.

3. *In such penitence and faith we should follow Him.* "Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all and followed Him." They were called to preach the Gospel of Christ, and to this they were in future to devote themselves wholly. In that sense it is the will of the Lord still that many who realize His goodness should forsake all and follow Him. There is no nobler and more needful work than that of preaching to poor, sinful men the unsearchable riches of Christ, and there is no other calling in which the labor-

ers are so few compared with the greatness of the field. Are there not some of you, who hear me to-day, convinced that the Master wants you for that glorious work, and who are assured that the words are for you, "From henceforth thou shalt catch men?" If so, do not let worldly considerations deter you from a vocation so full of promise and so rich in fruits. Forsake all and follow Him, and His blessing will attend you in life and death. But it is not only the ministers of the Gospel that are to follow Him. No mistake can be greater than that of supposing that the great responsibility is a good reason for shunning the ministry. It is required of a steward that a man be found faithful, whatever His vocation may be. Of ministers of the Gospel no more than this, and of laborers in every other calling no less than this is required. All are to serve the Lord and labor at His word, and this implies that they must forsake all and follow Him. Not that they are to run away from the community and the work which is needful in it, but that they are to serve the Lord with all their strength, and abandon all the lust of the flesh and the pride of life, and walk with Jesus. For to this end were we called, as to this end we were created and redeemed, that henceforth we should not live unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us and rose again. May the grace of our Lord effect this in us all. Amen.

Sixth Sunday after Trinity.

MATT. 5, 20–26.

For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

Dear Brethren:

Be ye holy, for I am holy, saith the Lord. That is the demand which God makes upon His intelligent creatures. Man was made in the image of His Maker, and thus was holy in the beginning. So he was designed to be. He fell from his original holiness, but that did not change the divine purpose. God's will remained the same. Be ye holy, is His requirement still. Without that no man shall see God. The fact that man is born in sin and has no power to change his condition and meet the divine requirement, only renders the demand of greater moment for us. What shall be done to execute the will of God and secure our salvation? That is the great question for man to consider and to answer. How shall we,

the unjust, become just before God? Our sin renders all our efforts to attain righteousness by compliance with the divine command unavailing. With all our endeavors to be holy and live righteously we are sinners still, and the God of holiness condemns us. The scribes and Pharisees were well aware that in order to stand before God they must be righteous; but our text gives us the warning that what they regarded as righteousness will not avail in His sight. Unless your righteousness exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. Let us therefore to-day, in accordance with our text, inquire into

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS THAT AVAILS BEFORE GOD.

It is a righteousness 1. *Of the heart, not merely of works*, and 2. *Acquired by Christ and imputed to us by faith.* May the entrance of God's Word give us light on the all-important subject!

I. The righteousness that avails before God is a *righteousness of the heart, not merely of the external life.*

1. The scribes and Pharisees had an erroneous conception of it that still finds many adherents. It is indeed natural to suppose, when the divine demand of obedience is set before us, that the performance of the work prescribed would be a fulfilment of the law. The Pharisees, who are held in such abhorrence for their insincerity, were not wicked in this respect above all other men. Theirs was the prevailing opinion among those who endeavored to work out in their own minds the difficult problem of righteousness, and is the prevailing opinion still. Indeed, it is not easy to conceive how human reason could devise any other plan. The sinful heart can suggest no way of putting away sin but that of not doing what the righteous law forbids and of doing what the righteous law requires.

That it should go back of such action and endeavor to purify the spring could not be expected. Works are in man's power, the heart is not; and reason readily concludes that more than we are able to render justice cannot require. That a debt still remains a debt when a man has squandered his property is seen well enough, but it is presumed that God will not deal in such strict justice. It is quite overlooked that all righteousness rests on the holiness of God, and that if He ceases to enforce strict justice its entire foundation is gone. The natural man cannot appreciate the holiness of the Creator and the earnestness of the demand made upon the creature. Superficial views of righteousness are therefore common among men. The Pharisees thought as unaided reason generally thinks. Even in some of the churches, with all the light which the Scriptures give us on the subject, such superficial opinions are entertained. They underlie the whole scheme of righteousness by works as we find it current among Romanists and among many others who, while they profess a horror of Romanism, adopt its fundamental heresy. That heresy does not lie in teaching that the works prescribed by the holy commandments of God are to be scrupulously performed. Certainly what the law forbids is to be carefully avoided and what it enjoins is to be diligently done. He who is indifferent about doing the commands of God is far from all righteousness. But it is not on that account the less an error to imagine that such external compliance with good rules is obedience to God, and constitutes a righteousness which avails before Him. The outward life should be ordered according to the divine will. So far the view under consideration is correct. But when the outward life is made to conform to the law, while the heart is at enmity with God who gave it and stands in conflict with the holiness which it enjoins, it is plain that there is something radically wrong, and just as plain that such a right-

eousness does not satisfy the divine demand. Hence our Lord says: "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth and honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Matt. 15, 7–9. Where righteousness is sought merely in the external conduct, in the words and actions of men, all sorts of regulations are made, as the Pharisees made them and Rome still makes them; but no effort to fulfill the requirements of the law by outward forms of obedience will render sinful men acceptable to God. "I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

2. Our Lord illustrates by reference to the fifth commandment what the law means. "Ye have heard that it was said by those of old time, Thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment; but I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." What the Savior teaches is not that murder shall not subject the criminal to judgment. The external action by which the neighbor's life is destroyed is a grievous sin, and he who violates the law shall not be held guiltless. But the command means more than that. It is violated by the murderous heart even when the outward murderous action does not follow. As he that looketh upon a woman to lust after her hath already committed adultery in his heart, so he that is angry with his brother without a cause has already killed him in his heart. "Without a cause" is inserted as a limitation, because there is an anger that is not forbidden, and is not

murderous. It is that which results from zeal for God's cause and which is directed against the wrong-doing, because that tramples on righteousness and dishonors God. We do well to hate sin and be angry with it, as God is angry with it every day. But the anger meant here, as the connection shows even if the phrase "without a cause" be omitted, is that which results from a selfish and uncharitable disposition. It is the passionate expression of ill-will. Such a state of the heart is itself a violation of the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," as the Holy Spirit says by St. John: "Whoso hateth his brother is a murderer." 1 John 3, 15. It is therefore a total misapprehension of the meaning of the law when it is referred simply to the external action. "The law is spiritual," says St. Paul. It applies to the person, not merely to the activities of the body. Therefore the law against the destruction of life is broken when the soul has thoughts and feelings that are murderous. Anger subjects to the judgment to which the murderer is amenable. The outburst of such anger in abusive words, such as Raca and fool, the one signifying an intellectual incompetent, the other a moral good-for-nothing, only subjects to the heavier punishment, as showing that there is no restraint placed upon the utterances of the evil heart. He that hates his brother is a murderer, and he that manifests his murderous disposition in malicious words has thus even outwardly violated the law.

Let no one think, therefore, that he keeps the law while his heart is full of selfish envy and malice. Only love is the fulfilling of the law; and selfishness and lovelessness is its violation, whatever the external action may be. "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer

thy gift. Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him, lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt not come out thence till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing." Instead of fulfilling the law by refraining from external murder, though there be murder in the heart, we can fulfill it only by the love and meekness which would injure no one, but render service to all, and which seeks to be reconciled when wrong has been done, or is even supposed to have been done to a neighbor. A person who has the heart which the law requires will not think of offering an acceptable sacrifice to God, so long as there is any ill-will between him and his brother that he has not done all in his power to remove. He knows that the oblations are vain and the incense is an abomination that are brought with sin upon the soul and bitterness in the heart, and that the Lord has said: "When ye spread forth your hands I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hear: your hands are full of blood." Isa. 1, 15. If even one sin remain upon the soul, it is in danger of being cast into prison. And if we die in such sin, there is no deliverance from the prison into which the sinner is cast. The uttermost farthing must be paid. With God there is no relinquishment of claims. "Be ye holy" is His demand for ever, and if the heart is not right it will stand against us as our condemnation. Not until the uttermost farthing is paid under the law can any one be released from punishment, and as the debt cannot be paid in the future world, the fire of hell is never quenched and the worm that gnaws the transgressor never dies. The law is fulfilled only when the heart is holy; it cannot be fulfilled by mere outward acts. Such an external righteousness does not meet its requirement.

The righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees does not avail before God. Unless we have a better righteousness than that we shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. That does not and cannot satisfy the law. But is there a righteousness that can satisfy it? Thank God, there is.

II. *It is the righteousness of God by faith in Christ.* It is true, even when we are in Christ our righteousness of life is not such as avails before God; but we then have a righteousness which is perfect imputed to us by faith. This we proceed to explain.

1. The believer in Christ has a better righteousness than that of the scribes and Pharisees, inasmuch as he has the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit; but even the holiness thus obtained does not avail for the sinner's salvation.

"If a man be in Christ Jesus he is a new creature," says St. Paul; "old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." 2 Cor. 5, 17. The grace of God which is given us by the Gospel does not affect merely the outward life. The law gives us all needful directions in that regard. The Holy Spirit is given us to renew the heart. That is the seat of all our trouble. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." Rom. 8, 7–9. When there is such an indwelling of the Spirit by the Gospel, the requirements of the law become the objects of our renewed will. Holiness is not only demanded, but desired. We long after it and earnestly pursue it. Then only do we rightly begin to obey the law, because then there is an inward conformity to its demands. What nature could not

effect, grace now produces. There is now no longer enmity to God, but as the hart panteth after the water brooks so pants the soul after Him. To do His will is our chief joy; to fail in the apprehension or performance of His will, our greatest grief. That is an internal righteousness that far exceeds the mere external righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. The grace of God thus brings about a life of holiness which nature never could effect under the law. There is then not less attention paid to the outward life—to the right works and the right words—as the holy law of God requires them. Rather is there a more scrupulous care that no offence be given in anything, but rather that God may be glorified in all things. But while earnest endeavors are put forth that all our works may be done in charity, the impulse comes from the Spirit of God, who hath given us the will and works the performance of His good pleasure, so that the outward work is a sincere expression of the heart's desires.

And yet such righteousness does not avail before God for the sinner's justification. With all its sincerity it comes far short of the glory of God. It is not perfect. The most advanced Christian is still a sinner. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." 1 John 1, 8. Those who think themselves without sin either do not know themselves or do not know the nature of sin. It is easy enough for man, in that fond conceit of himself which is the result of sin in his soul and is itself an evidence of its existence there, to imagine that he is pure as an angel, notwithstanding the iniquity of his heart, which is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. He is but too prone to cloak his sin and hide it from his own eyes as well as from the eyes of others. Self-deception is possible because of the wickedness of the heart, and many are they who practice it. Hence the

need of frequent self-examination. "For if a man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another." Gal. 6, 3, 4. Let us be careful and not permit Satan to blind us to the evil that is within us. He means mischief. But let us rather permit the law to do its work, for by that is the knowledge of sin. Then we shall be protected also against the fatal error of declaring that to be indifferent which is the fundamental sin, namely, the evil desires of the heart For it is the superficial view of righteousness found in the scribes and Pharisees which again becomes manifest in the superficial view of sin that leads many to flatter themselves that they have none. If the depravity that is in our nature, the evil lust out of which grow the evil thoughts and words and deeds, are thought to be no sin, it is again easy enough for unwary souls to fall into the devil's snare, and to flatter themselves that they need no forgiveness because there is nothing in them that violates the divine law. Against this twofold deception we must diligently watch and pray. If the sin that is usually in us is not seen because Satan has blinded us, or if the evil lustings that we cannot but see in our hearts are declared innocent because Satan has deceived us, it is natural that we should say that we have no sin; but in both cases we manifestly "deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." And such self-deception is fatal, because it leads to the fond conceit that we have in ourselves the righteousness which avails before God; and not seeing the need of any other, the soul neglects, if it does not positively reject, the great salvation which is offered in the righteousness of Christ. Learn therefore to say with the apostle: "Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect." Phil. 3, 12. The Holy Spirit does purify the heart by faith, but in those who

believe there are still the motions of sin, as the apostle says: "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Gal. 5, 17. Thus the flesh is the sin in us, out of which the sins of action flow, as the apostle says: "The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Gal. 5, 19–21. Such sins are done because the impulse to their commission is given by the flesh, that is, by the evil or sin which is still in the recesses of the heart, as our Savior says: "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." Matt. 15, 19. The experience of watchful Christians daily confirms the teaching of the Scriptures, that there is nothing but imperfection in us, and that even our best wishes have in them the taint of sin, which still dwelleth in us. Therefore the righteousness wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, being still imperfect, is not sufficient to justify us in the sight of God. For our salvation a righteousness even better than that is necessary, as it is written: "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Rom. 3, 20.

2. But if the righteousness which is wrought in us by the sanctification of the Spirit does not suffice, what can avail in the sight of God? Is there then any hope for sinners? There is. They have a Savior. The good tidings of the Gospel are preached to men. "Now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteous-

ness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus." Rom. 3, 21–24. No righteousness that is in our hearts, where sin still dwells, can satisfy the perfect law's demand. Nothing less than perfect sinlessness and perfect holiness can render such satisfaction. And such satisfaction is rendered by the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. We have a perfect Savior. Not only does sanctifying power flow from His life to quicken and make us purer day by day, but He acquired a righteousness for us by His perfect obedience in our stead, and this righteousness is imputed to us by faith. All that the law required of us He rendered, all the punishment which it threatened against us for our transgression He suffered. "He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Phil. 2, 7. 8. It was needful that the Son of God should assume our nature that He might take our place and be our substitute; it was needful that He should fulfill all righteousness by doing and suffering all that the holy law required, because this is what we were bound to do. The righteousness which He thus acquired by His obedience unto death was not for Himself. He is Lord of all, and was not subject to the law for His own sake. But He subjected Himself for our justification. He was perfectly holy and His life was perfectly holy, as the law required. And that is the righteousness which avails before God. That is ours by faith. It is imputed to the believer. Our hearts still have sin, our lives are imperfect even after we are regenerated by being grafted into Christ by Holy Baptism through faith. But Christ's life and

obedience is perfect. That is set down to our account when we believe. Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. In view of our own life we could have no peace, because it is not perfectly holy as the law requires. But Christ is our peace, as He is our salvation. In His righteousness there is no blemish, and that is the righteousness in which the believer is clothed. That avails before God, and nothing else can avail.

The better righteousness than that of the scribes and Pharisees is the heart righteousness which the law requires, as against the work-righteousness which the Pharisees taught. But even the heart righteousness as it is in the children of God is not the ground of their salvation. For this we must look to Christ. There is no hope for us and no help for us but in Him. Therefore see to it, brethren, that your life be better than that of the Pharisees; but see to it, above all, that for your salvation you trust in Jesus only. To Him be glory forever. Amen.

Seventh Sunday after Trinity.

MARK 8, 1–9.

In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples unto Him, and saith unto them, I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat: and if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for divers of them came from far. And His disciples answered Him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness? And He asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven. And He commanded the people to sit down on the ground: and He took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to His disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people. And they had a few small fishes; and He blessed, and commanded to set them also before them. So they did eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets. And they that had eaten were about four thousand: and He sent them away.

Dear Brethren:

We are troubled about many things. Our life is full of cares. On all sides we see danger that things will go wrong. We worry and fret about it, and have no peace of mind respecting the present or the future. Even when all is well we are afraid that the tide may turn any moment, and anxiety oppresses us. This comes, on the one hand, from a fond conceit of ourselves, as if everything depended upon our wisdom and management, and, on the other, from a lack of trust in God, who governs all things wisely and well. And with all the conceit of our own superior wisdom we do not feel safe after all. There are still misgivings as to our ability to control all the various forces of nature and will that shape the events of our lives, and we have endless fears coupled with endless

cares. This makes life full of trouble. And for this there is no remedy but that which reaches the root of the disease, the sin of the soul. But such a remedy is offered us in the Gospel of the grace of God in Christ our Savior. That will enable us to cast our cares on Him and to have confidence in His government of the world and His providence over us and all things. This our text teaches us, and to this Christians must give earnest heed. Let us then take to heart the lesson that

THE LORD WILL PROVIDE,

that we may lead a contented and devoted life in all godliness. Our Gospel teaches us 1. *That He has compassion on His people;* 2. *That His help is sure and will not fail;* 3. *That He gives in overflowing measure.* May His grace lead us to know and believe the truth!

I. *The Lord has compassion on His people* in temporal as well as in spiritual things.

1. "In those days, the multitude being very great and having nothing to eat, Jesus called His disciples unto Him and said unto them, I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days and have nothing to eat." The multitude was gathered around Him for another purpose than that of having their bodily wants supplied. He preached to them the truth unto salvation. That was the object of His mission. On that everything depended. What would it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul? The Lord Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost —to deliver the spiritually perishing from the doom that awaited them, and to lead them to the green pastures and still waters of His grace. His wisdom and His mercy are magnified in the rich provision which was made for the supply of our spiritual wants.

In that respect man was utterly and hopelessly helpless. He could do nothing for himself, absolutely nothing. The corruption of his nature left no possibility of amendment by any power in his possession. He was condemned, and both the holiness and the truth of God, who pronounced condemnation upon his sin, stood in the way of escape from his doom. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Sentence of death was therefore pronounced upon all men. There seemed no way of deliverance. So far as human wisdom and power are concerned there was no way. But what man could not do God did. He provided. He sent His own dear Son into the world to save us. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "When we were yet without strength in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Death is the wages of sin, and He endured it for sinners. He bought us with a price. He purchased us, not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and His innocent sufferings and death. And that we might believe in Him who redeemed us, He gave us the holy Gospel, the holy sacrament of baptism, and the holy supper of His body and blood, in which His quickening Spirit comes to the soul to give it life and preserve it in Christ unto salvation. Thus He has provided richly for all our spiritual wants, so that to-day again, as every day, we can feed upon the bread of life. He has had compassion on us, and has compassion on us still. Cast all your spiritual cares on Him; He careth for you, and will not suffer any to perish who put their trust in Him.

2. But our text has special reference to the Lord's provision for the wants of the body, and in that, as in every other respect, it is needful to have faith in God. He had compassion on the multitude, who had now been with Him three days and had nothing to eat. He was caring

for their souls, but that did not render Him indifferent to their temporal wants. "If I send them away fasting to their own houses they will faint by the way, for divers of them came from far." While He was feeding them with the bread of life, which is of infinitely higher importance than the earthly bread which nourishes the body, He was deeply concerned that they should not suffer for lack of such bodily nourishment. Nothing would be further from the truth than that our Savior, having come to furnish us with the greater, cares nothing for the less. He is our Shepherd, and we shall not want. This applies as well to our temporal as to our eternal welfare. Hence we are admonished to trust in Him for earthly as well as for heavenly things, and in quiet confidence pray to Him for all needful supplies. "Therefore take no thought," our Master tells us, "saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek.) For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Matt. 6, 31–33. The lesson which He thus teaches us is as important as it is comforting. We should not waste our strength in useless cares, but put our trust in God. If we are His children by faith in Christ Jesus, we have all that is necessary. He will provide for His children. They shall not want. Every day they ask Him for their daily bread, and every day He has compassion on them and hears their prayers. All anxiety about it comes from unbelief. Why should we doubt His tender care, when we have His promise that He will not forsake us and that we shall not want, and have all the experience of His people to confirm His promise? Therefore hear His word: "Be careful for nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto

God. And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Phil. 4, 6. 7. The way of trust is the way of peace. All our cares and all our worry bring no bread. The Lord cares for us: that is our comfort, and that quiets all anxiety, if we only believe it. Therefore "cast all your care upon Him, for He careth for you." 1 Pet. 5, 7. His compassion fails not.

II. *His help is sure.* His mercy endureth forever, and there is no limit to His power. His means are inexhaustible.

1. "His disciples answered Him, From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?" That is a natural question. Where the multitude was assembled to hear the Lord there was no visible way of supplying their bodily wants. Bread enough for such a large number of people was not to be had in such a place. The Lord had compassion on them, but what would that avail against the manifest impossibility of securing the means in the time of need? In the spirit of that question men reason still, and that causes anxiety. When we have no bread and no money, and see no way of procuring them; when troubles environ us and we see no way of escape from the harassment; when all the ordinary means of earthly support seem to fail, and nothing but want and wretchedness are in prospect,—of what avail is the Lord's compassion, even assuming that the assurances of Scripture in that regard are all true? So our unbelieving hearts are consumed with care, and the darkened understanding regards the tormenting sophistry reasonable. So foolish is man in his boasted wisdom that he cannot understand how God can furnish us with the necessaries of life when the requisite means are not before our eyes. These unbelieving hearts of ours, they cause all the trouble. Could we but realize the Lord's compassion, and the Lord's un-

bounded ability to do what His compassion suggests, how quietly and confidently we would cast our cares upon Him and let Him provide! Trust in the Lord; He has ways and means always, whether you have money or not, whether you have health or not, whether you have barns and larders full or not. He will provide, and does not need your wisdom or your labor to render His provision effectual. That He has commanded us to work, and has even ordained that he who will not work shall not eat, does not imply that He is dependent upon our management or our industry for the means to carry on His government. We are dependent on Him, but not He on us. Only have faith in Him and His promises: that faith will never be put to shame.

2. If the ordinary means, to which we are accustomed to look for supplies, fail to meet the exigency, He has infinite resources besides. In answer to the perplexed question of His disciples about furnishing bread for so many in the wilderness, where none was to be seen, "He asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven. And He commanded the people to sit down on the ground; and He took the seven loaves and gave thanks and brake, and gave to His disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people. And they had a few small fishes; and He blessed, and commanded to set them also before them. So they did eat and were filled; and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets. And they that had eaten were about five thousand. And He sent them away." See with how little ado the seemingly insuperable difficulty was overcome! To feed such a multitude in such a place seemed impossible. To human power it was impossible, and human reason is accustomed to confine its view to human power. But here was one who had and still has all power in heaven and on earth, and He had compassion on the people and has compassion still. He is our refuge

and strength, a very present help in trouble. He is our Shepherd, and we shall not want. It is said, indeed, that the age of miracles is past, and this is truly said. There were circumstances in those days which suggested the need of resorting to extraordinary means for the accomplishment of divine ends. These circumstances do not exist now, and therefore the miracles which they rendered necessary are not necessary now. But the same Lord is living yet, and His power is in no respect limited. He can work miracles now as well as then, and there is nothing in the Scriptures to indicate that He has not now the will to work them as well as then, should the need for them occur. And the need for them would occur if the ordinary means proved inadequate to secure the ends of His compassion. He will provide. His promise will be redeemed. He will supply your bodily wants as surely as the wants of your souls. If there is no other way He will work miracles to supply them. Only trust in Him.

III. *He gives in overflowing measure.* The few loaves and fishes were multiplied so largely that not only were the thousands fed, but "they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets." So the compassionate Lord usually feeds His people still. It would be sufficient for our need, if every day He gave us simply enough to satisfy our hunger, and His children ought to be contented if they receive that. They need no more. But in most cases He gives more than that. Most of us have an abundance for days and weeks in advance. Some even have wealth. He richly as well as daily provides us with all that we need to support this body and life, and all this out of pure mercy and compassion, without any merit or worthiness in us.

1. He thus supports our weak faith, that is so prone to waver or to fail when we have no visible evidence that His promises will be fulfilled. It is true, faith should cling to the Word, and no evidence can make that more sure;

and even reason ought to be satisfied with the confirmation that the supply of our wants each day furnishes. But the Lord has compassion on us also in the conflicts of the Spirit with the flesh in our souls. He knows how frail we are. When we are in straits and cannot see how help is to be afforded, we become disheartened, and notwithstanding all the assurances of the Word the flesh suggests doubts. You know how it is, dear brethren. When we have plenty in advance it seems easy enough to trust in Providence, though but too often there is no faith in the Word, but only idolatrous trust in money or in the provisions laid up in store for future use. All these may perish any moment. Certain it is that they could not, though they seem enough to supply our want for many years, sustain us a day without His care and blessing who alone provides, and in whom we are commanded to trust. If He do not feed us we are not fed, whatever may be our stock laid up in store; and He can sustain us and will sustain us just as easily when we have nothing laid up as when we have abundance. What He desires is that we have faith, and that means that we trust His promises, whether we can see or cannot see how He will fulfill them. He will fulfill them; that is certain. But He pities our weakness that wants to see, and therefore not only shows us every day that He can and will give us our daily bread, but gives us enough to last for many days. By such goodness He would lead you to repentance for past doubtings and murmurings, and urge you not to give way to the tempter in future, but trust in the Lord, who giveth you all things richly to enjoy.

2. Furthermore, by such abundant supplies He would teach us not to waste, but to save the gifts that are not needed for immediate use. The Lord has infinite resources, yet He wants nothing squandered. He commands the surplus of His rich supplies to be taken up

and preserved, that nothing be lost. Many a rich man thinks that there is no need for economy, since he has enough and to spare. He forgets that he is a steward only, not the proprietor of the goods, and that the Master will in due time call him to give an account of his stewardship. That Master is rich, immensely rich; but He wants nothing wasted. He has created all things for use, that the Maker may be glorified, and no one will be held guiltless that treats these gifts as if they were worthless. It is not only a privilege, but a solemn duty to save the fragments. But there are errors among men not only in the direction of extravagance and waste. Some save, but they save in a wrong spirit and for a wrong purpose. The erring thought that governs them is that they must provide for the future, as if the Lord God had committed His government to them and relinquished all care for His creatures. Know therefore that the Lord provides, whether He has given you much or given you little—that He does not cease to provide when He has committed much to your charge, as He does not cease to provide when He has committed little. He wants us to save, but not because He could not supply the necessaries of life without our aid. He is in no wise dependent on our care and our economy. But He would have us accomplish His will, that it may be well with us. Miserly hoarding, with a view of providing for ourselves, whatever may be the will of God, is damnable, because it uses God's gifts as if we were lords over them and could do with them as we please; but saving all God's bounties, that His will may be done with them and they may subserve the purpose for which He gave them, is right and good and blessed.

3. Those who save in that spirit will be almoners of God's bounty, and in this way also be workers together with God. They will not lay up money or gather property for the purpose of seeking security or safety in their

riches, but for the sake of preserving the gifts of God for benevolent uses. "Charge them that are rich in this world," says the apostle, "that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." 1 Tim. 6, 17–19. The acquisition of riches must not be an object in our daily labor. They sin who work for that, instead of working that they may render their fellow men service according to the will of God. "Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." 1 Tim. 6, 8–10. God does not give us abundance that we may substitute riches for the living God and thus practice idolatry. He gives us more than we need that we may have the joy of dispensing bounties in His name. That is something to delight in. Therefore we are commanded to "labor, working with our hands the thing which is good, that we may have to give to him that needeth." Eph. 6, 28. In that way the superfluous gifts bestowed upon us by God's bounty will promote the welfare of our neighbor, glorify the gracious Lord who gives so richly, and afford us the pure enjoyment of exercising charity in giving. For He would have us follow the example of our Savior and have compassion on our fellow men, as He has compassion on us, using our spare means to help them spiritually and bodily in His blessed name.

We have thus seen from the Gospel lesson for the

day that the Lord will provide—that He has compassion on man, that His help will never fail, and that He gives in overflowing measure. Let us take these things to heart, that our murmurings and complainings may cease, that we may be content with those things which we have, and eat our bread with thankfulness; and that we may never cease to bless His holy name, who offers us salvation for our souls and richly supplies the wants of our bodies out of His infinite mercy. Amen.

Eighth Sunday after Trinity.

MATT. 7, 15–23.

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Dear Brethren:

There is no subject that approaches in importance that of the soul's salvation. The world lieth in wickedness and the sentence of death is upon all men. How shall we escape the coming doom? That is the most momentous of all questions. Men may smile as men may frown, but they must sooner or later recognize the fact that they must die, and after death the judgment. From that there is no exemption. Therefore our Lord warns us: "Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." There are enough who would have us believe that this is not so serious a matter, and that not so much depends upon our faith or our life—that we can

think what we please and do what we please, and all will come right at last. Such blind guides only lead souls into the ditch. There is a mighty Savior, and we can by faith in Him escape the damnation of hell. But He is the only way, and there is salvation in no other; and to Him we can come and in Him abide only through His revealed Word. Only that can lead us aright. Hence He taught that Word as our great Prophet, and sent His disciples to preach it. But Satan wages war against Christ, and there is a constant struggle going on between the merciful and mighty Savior and the malicious and wily enemy of souls. As the Lord sends out prophets to lead men to salvation, the devil sends out false prophets to lead men to destruction. Hence our Lord's earnest

WARNING AGAINST FALSE PROPHETS.

Let us endeavor to lay aside all carnal prejudice, all the rationalism and sentimentalism of our corrupt nature, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit take this warning sincerely to heart. We inquire 1. *What is its import?* 2. *Whom does it concern?* and 3. *Why is it necessary?* Sanctify us, O Lord, through Thy truth; Thy Word is truth.

I. Our first inquiry pertains to *the import of our Lord's warning.* It manifestly implies these two things: first, that we learn to know the false prophets, and secondly, that we avoid them. Nothing can be more clear than that if we would beware of false prophets we must first discern them, for which purpose our Lord has given us marks, and that when He tells us to beware of them, He means that we should not follow them or have any part in their errors.

1. It is impossible to beware of false prophets without knowing them. Therefore our Lord says: "Ye shall

know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them." It must be noticed that our Lord is speaking of prophets. Each tree is known by its own fruit. We do not look for grapes on thorns. A prophet in the strict sense is one who foretells future events; in the wider sense he is one who declares the Word. The preachers are called prophets. They proclaim the message of God. The fruit of a prophet is the doctrine which he preaches. By that we are to examine prophets and to test them. If their doctrine coincides with the Scriptures,—if they preach the Word, as the Lord has commanded,—they are true prophets; if they preach error,—if they set forth as divine truth what God has not taught and not sent them to preach,—they are false prophets and we must beware of them.

The opinion is entertained by many that the fruits to which our Lord refers and by which the prophet is to be known is the life. They think that when a preacher leads an ungodly life he must be a false prophet; that when his life is such that no fault is found with it, but that it seems holy and godly, he must be a true prophet. This opinion seems to them sustained by our Savior's words when He says: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Unquestionably, the Lord here rebukes

all mere pretence and hypocrisy, and warns us that there must be something more than our mere profession to render us acceptable in His sight. On the judgment day it will avail us nothing to refer to the fact that we have been prophets and have done wonderful things. All depends upon doing the will of the Lord, not upon mere saying, Lord, Lord, and thus pretending to be ardent followers and worshipers of the Lord, while His holy will is disregarded. Such calling upon Him with the lips while the heart is far from Him, only provokes His displeasure. But whilst the truth is of general application, that not he that saith, Lord, Lord, but he that doeth the Lord's will is acceptable to Him, it must be kept in mind that the warning here is especially against false prophets, who make false pretensions and mislead souls; and the marks are presented by which we may know these false prophets, in order that we may beware of them. They shall be known by their fruits. And these fruits are the doctrines which they preach. The life cannot distinguish the true prophet from the false. A man may preach the truth and fail to show his sound doctrine by a God-pleasing life. But that does not render him a false prophet: it renders him a false Christian rather, while his prophesying may be right. On the other hand, a man may preach error and still lead a life of seeming holiness. Such a man shows himself to be a false prophet, whatever may be thought of his personal piety. By his fruits we know him. The false doctrine shows him to be a false prophet.

Indeed, it is absurd to assume that the personal holiness or earnest Christian life is to be the test of the prophet. By that criterion we never could detect those who are false prophets, and therefore never could profit by the warning against them. We cannot see into the hearts of men and cannot thus ascertain who really loves and honors the Savior; and as for the external life, which

we can see, that never reveals the false prophet. The external appearance of piety and the crying of Lord, Lord, is precisely the sheep's clothing that is put on for the purpose of deceiving. The false teacher never professes to be a deceiver. He does not confess that he is prophesying lies. He claims to come in the Lord's name and to preach the Lord's words. He says Lord, Lord, in order to make his false prophecy acceptable to Christians. He may therefore even boast of his superior holiness and seek in this way to make his error plausible and palatable. He comes not as a manifest wolf, but as a wolf in sheep's clothing. Therefore no pious pretensions nor piety, real or feigned, can be the mark by which we can distinguish true and false prophets. Nothing can be such a mark but the prophet's fruits, which are his prophesying. Whether he is a true or a false prophet you can know only by comparing his teaching with the Word of God. If he speaks not according to this Word, but preaches his own opinions instead of the Lord's truth, he is a false prophet. You cannot know him by the sheep's clothing of piety that he puts on, but you can know him by his prophesying or preaching, which are his fruits as a prophet. Only by his doctrine can you know whether a preacher is a true or a false prophet.

2. When we have learned to know the false prophets we are to avoid them. That is the object of our Lord in giving us the marks by which we may know them. By their fruits we shall know them, not to the end that our theoretical knowledge may be increased, but to the practical end that we may be protected against the destructive results of being deceived and misled by Satan, who seeks our ruin and misery. "Beware of them" is our Lord's command. Have nothing to do with them: do not listen to them; do not go to their assemblies; do not worship with them; be careful not to follow them. Give no assent

to their false teaching in your hearts or in your words or in your conduct. That this is the meaning of our Lord's words is evident from the instructions and warnings given in other portions of Scripture. "Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached," says St. Paul, "let him be accursed." Gal. 1, 8. No other Gospel could be preached in the Lord's name and could do the Lord's work of salvation, and any other would mark the false prophet of whom we must beware. "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds," says St. John, the apostle of love. 2 John 10, 11. It is an evil deed to teach as God's truth what is man's invention, and thus to deprive people of that which brings salvation, though they would be willing to hear it; and any one who receives such a teacher of false doctrine becomes a party to the pernicious fraud. Again St. Paul says: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them." Rom. 16, 17. If we would come off victorious in the great strife between light and darkness, between Christ and Satan; if we would walk in the narrow path that leads to life, and shun the broad road that leads to destruction,—we must heed these words. For our Lord tells us that if we continue in His words, we are His disciples indeed, while the doctrines which false prophets scatter in the world are designed by Satan to lead away from the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. Even though they should mean well, being themselves deceived by the cunning wiles of the enemy, they are false prophets, and we must beware of them. Therefore no appearance of sincerity on their part should be allowed to mislead us. If they teach otherwise

than God's Word teaches we must give them no encouragement by hearing them; we must avoid them.

II. *Whom does this warning concern?* We think it needful to present this question, because duties are often evaded on the plea that they are laid upon others, not upon us. Nor is this in itself an absurdity. It has enough of speciousness to deceive even sincere men. The special duties which are enjoined upon fathers and mothers will not apply equally to the children. That which is obligatory upon pastors is not therefore enjoined also upon those committed to their charge. It is therefore of great importance to be convinced from the Word of God that our Lord's warning refers not merely to pastors and teachers, but to the members of the church generally.

1. It of course refers to ministers, but not to these exclusively. The pastor is commanded to take heed unto himself and to the doctrine. The Word is committed to him as the minister of the Lord. "Let a man so account of us as the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God." 1 Cor. 4, 1. As such stewards they must needs watch that the truth be not perverted, but be maintained for the glory of the Lord and the welfare of souls. Therefore the hearers are commanded: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account." Heb. 13, 17. But such obedience is commanded only because they are bound to preach the Word of the Lord, so that he who heareth them hears His Word. Hence it is said to ministers: "I charge thee therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they

heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears, and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things." 2 Tim. 4, 1–5. They are bound to guard the doctrine and resist all corruptions, contending earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints.

But it would be dangerous as well as false to maintain that they alone are to guard the purity of the Gospel. If that were the case the hearers would be subject entirely to the preachers, and the way would be opened for all the tyranny which Rome has practiced and to all the slavery to which it subjects the people. Then the ministers would justly claim the authority to decide what must be believed and to dictate their faith to the people, instead of preaching the Word and urging the people to search the Scriptures whether these things are so, that they may be convinced from the infallible record. Those who urge that the doctrine is altogether a matter for preachers to determine and that others have nothing to do with it, know not what they do. They make the pastors lords over God's heritage instead of ministers of the Lord and of the church, who are to preach His Word and give account to Him for the fidelity with which they declare and preserve the truth given by inspiration of God and written for our learning.

2. The warning to beware of false prophets refers especially to the hearers. This is evident from the fact that they are especially in danger of being deceived and destroyed by ravening wolves. The prophet teaches, and those who are taught are the ones whom the Lord enjoins to be on their guard lest they be taught human error, which is powerless for good, instead of the Gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation. Whilst prophets themselves must be careful not to allow others to deceive them, it is always the learner that is warned to beware of the false teacher. The very words of the text therefore

show clearly that the warning refers to the hearers in the congregation. These are in danger of being misled by false teachers, and they must watch lest they be lured into the broad road, instead of being led into the narrow path, by the prophets coming to them.

Hence Christians are commanded to search the Scriptures, to prove all things and hold fast that which is good, to let the word of Christ dwell in them richly in all wisdom, and to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. They are required to make themselves acquainted with the Scriptures, which are "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." They are to know the truth, and to hold fast what they have, that no man take their crown. If they do not acquaint themselves with the truth, so that they can distinguish between that and the errors which are current in the world, they are in danger of falling a prey to prowling wolves. There is no protection for congregations against the falsehoods which Satan seeks to substitute for the everlasting Gospel, except a careful study of the Word of God and a constant searching of the Scriptures, that if any false doctrine is preached it may be detected and corrected. On this account our children are instructed, that they may be enabled to give a reason for the hope that is in them, before they are admitted to holy communion, and urged, as the Word of God requires, to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Savior. The teaching of the Scriptures throughout implies that Christians love the Word of God and delight in meditating upon its precepts and promises for daily growth and spiritual nourishment.

Dear brethren, is it not a lamentable fact that in our days the attention of Christians is given too much to the things of the world and too little to the things which be-

long to our peace? Do we not suffer our minds to be absorbed by temporal affairs, so as to have but little time and opportunity for the study of God's Word? Are we not following the ways of the world so much that we are disqualifying ourselves to heed our Lord's warning against false prophets? There is a good deal of reading done among us; but is it not unhappily the case that this reading is mostly of a secular sort, and that it does not help to guard us against the soul-destroying errors which are sown broadcast over our land? Why, some are even so eager to read about the affairs of the world that they are not satisfied to read newspapers every week-day, but think it necessary even to have a Sunday secular paper, so that they have less and less time to read the Bible and religious books and periodicals, and to increase their knowledge of God's revelation from heaven for our soul's salvation. Is it right that thus we allow ourselves to be drawn away more and more from the love of the Scriptures and their devout and prayerful study? Let us see to it that Satan do not accomplish his malicious purpose and bring about our destruction by rendering us careless in searching the Scriptures. Beware of false prophets; search the Scriptures daily, that you may be able to beware of them.

III. There remains yet the question: *Why is such a warning necessary?* There is the more need for giving attention to this because many even among professed followers of Christ not only are unable to see the necessity of the warning, but even regard it as inconsistent with the demands of charity. Of course men will not, while they confess Christ to be their Lord and their Savior, directly and explicitly charge Him with giving commands that violate charity and provoke strife and contention. But there are many who, instead of submitting heartily to the Word of God, allow themselves to be led by their own reason and their own feeling, though that is blinded and perverted

by the sin that is in them, and to substitute thoughts of the flesh for the word of truth. The result is that they often set aside the clear declarations of our Lord, without designing to deny their truth and the obligation which they impose. Thus they come to think that when men cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which we have learned, it would not be in accord with the law of love and peace to avoid them, as long as they still profess to be Christians and to accept Christ as their Savior and the Bible as their guide. They give no earnest heed to the fact that false prophets come to us in sheep's clothing, though inwardly they are ravening wolves, and that many cry Lord, Lord, though they do not the will of our Father who is in heaven. Our Lord in His infinite love bids us beware of them, though they should seem to be the holiest and best of men. For it is not their holiness, even if that should be real, that saves men's souls, but the truth which is given by inspiration of God. To uphold this is the first demand of charity as well as of fidelity; for if this be lost, all is lost. The warning is therefore necessary for the salvation of man.

1. There is one Lord. We must honor Him alone as Lord and Master, and not give His glory to another. He gives us the truth which we are to believe, He gives us the law which we are to obey. When we listen to prophets who bring a different doctrine from that which He has taught us, we are allowing another to usurp His prerogative and to lord it over us. That is idolatrous. That deprives the true Lord of the glory which belongs to Him and renders us the slaves of men. Hence the first petition which the Savior has taught Christians to pray is, "Hallowed be Thy name." And that is done, as Luther has so briefly and clearly expressed it, "when the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and we as the children of God also lead a holy life according to it. But

he who teaches and lives otherwise than the Word of God teaches, profanes the name of God among us." When a prophet teaches the Word which the Lord has commanded him to teach, he honors the Master by recognizing His exclusive authority in His kingdom and by presenting that which is worthy of the Lord and accomplishes His purpose. When a man teaches otherwise than the Lord commands him to teach, and still professes to be a prophet of the Lord, He dishonors Him by failing to recognize Him as alone King in Zion, and by making Him responsible for opinions which, if they are not absurd or ridiculous, and thus disgraceful even to a sound-minded man, are certainly human and powerless to effect the end for which the divine truth is given. Therefore for the sake of the glory of our Lord, to whom is given a name above every name, we must beware of false prophets.

2. We must beware of them also for the sake of the salvation of human souls. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation; the truth makes free. So far as prophets preach that, they are wielding the power of God that saves; so far as they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, they are plying means that are impotent to save men from the death into which sin has brought them. Nor is that all. The error that is substituted for divine truth destroys what the power of God effects. Not only are no souls converted by it, seeing that God only can convert them and error is not of God and can be no instrumentality employed by the God of truth, but it counteracts the divine power which would save souls if they would beware of false prophets. Any false doctrine, though it might not seem of essential import, is dangerous. Many are saved, notwithstanding that they have erred, but the error has not only contributed nothing to the result, but has only made it more difficult of attainment; and many have perished in virtue of the very same

error: just as some have lived notwithstanding the poison introduced into their system, although others have died under its influence. It is always perilous, and no one can walk circumspectly while he is indifferent to the danger. Let us hear what the Lord tells us for our learning and our guidance. Beware of false prophets; though they come in sheep's clothing, their work is that of wolves. "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" One false doctrine leads to another, until the whole system is infected, and the saving truth is cast out; and false prophesying tolerated in the church will soon spread through the whole congregation. Beware of it for the sake of your own soul; beware of it for the sake of the souls of your brethren. All are endangered by it. Have charity towards others, and seek to protect them against the malice of the devil, who often succeeds in deceiving men who are not malicious, but whose error is still a leaven that must not be allowed to leaven the lump. "Their word will eat as doth a canker," says St. Paul. 2 Tim. 2, 17. Watch against it; beware of it.

Brethren, it is the love of our Lord that is giving us warning against false prophets; in love to your Lord and to the souls which He has purchased with a price, heed the warning. See that in the struggle against Satan and against sin ye continue in the Lord's Word. Hear Him, and for His sake and for the sake of the Church, which He has purchased with His blood, avoid those who teach otherwise than He teaches. Amen.

Ninth Sunday after Trinity.

LUKE 16, 1–9.

And He also said unto His disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward. Then the steward saith within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my Lord? And he said, A hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, A hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore. And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.

Brethren beloved in Christ:

In the chapter preceding the text just read it is shown how our Lord calls and comforts sinners. He comes to them with His grace, and will in no wise cast them out when by its power they turn to Him. On the contrary, there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, as there is joy on earth when a lost sheep or a lost piece of silver is found, or when the prodigal son returns in penitence to his father's house. But every sinner whom the Lord receives He employs in His service. We are not called into His vineyard to stand all the day idle. He makes us stewards of the gifts and goods committed to

us, and holds us responsible for their right administration according to His good will. It is required of stewards that a man be found faithful. This is the lesson taught us in the parable before us. It shows how a steward was found unfaithful and called to account and deposed. A warning is thus given us against wasting our Master's goods. But it also shows how zealously and prudently men of the world manage affairs in their own interest and for their own welfare, and how such prudence is commended. An example is thus given us which it is wise to follow. Let us therefore consider

THE UNJUST STEWARD,

1. *As a warning*, and 2. *As an example.* May the Lord give us grace to profit by the lesson.

I. The parable, in the first place, contains a warning. It does indeed seem, on a mere careless reading, as if the unjust steward were praised for the fraud which he practiced to extricate himself from the trouble into which his unfaithfulness had brought him. But a more careful reading of the text will teach us better. The steward was found unfaithful in administering his Lord's goods, and misery was the result. The text is therefore a warning against the unfaithfulness which always causes distress. Furthermore, the steward, when the trouble came, was shrewd in devising means to escape it, and in that respect, from a mere worldly point of view, did well. He continued in his unrighteous course, and made friends by his unrighteousness. That was the best that could be done on that wicked path. But he lost his stewardship. And when that is lost in the kingdom of God, everything is lost. In this life a man may maintain himself by his knavery, even when he is dismissed from the rich man's employment; but this will not apply to the future life. When

our Lord dismisses a steward for his unfaithfulness there is no help for him. His unrighteousness dooms him, when he is summoned to his reckoning, to everlasting punishment. The text is therefore a warning also against all attempts to escape the damnation of hell by a resort to practices which may stand us in good stead among men, but which will not avail before God.

1. "He said also unto His disciples, There was a certain rich man which had a steward, and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward." The rich man committed his goods to his servant to administer them wisely and justly, and the servant wasted them. He acted as if the goods were his and he could do with them what he pleased. The will of the true owner was not done, and the servant was found out. The day of account came, and as he was found unfaithful he could be no longer steward. He lost his place because he proved himself unworthy of it, and his misery was a consequence of his unfaithfulness to his master.

This illustrates our relation to our Lord, and warns us against all misuse of the goods committed to our care.

All Christians are stewards of the one Lord to whom all things belong and who rules over all. "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein; for He hath founded it upon the seas and established it upon the floods." Ps. 24, 1. 2. He who made all is certainly proprietor of all that He has made, and all must needs be subject to Him, by whose will alone they exist. Therefore He says: "Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains, and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry I would not tell

thee; for the world is mine and the fulness thereof." Ps. 50, 10–12. "Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's, thy God, the earth also with all that therein is." Deut. 10, 14. Not even we ourselves are our own; we are the Lord's, and that in a double sense: He has created us and He has redeemed us. And He has redeemed us to this end, that we might live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him all our days on earth and in heaven for ever. "He died for us all," says the apostle, "that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again." 2 Cor. 5, 15. Whatever we have we therefore hold in trust, and are bound to use it according to the owner's will. We are stewards. Our souls and bodies, our talents and acquirements, our houses and lands, our money and goods are all His, and He has entrusted them to us that we might with them do His holy will, not waste them by employing them for selfish ends.

It follows that to Him as the proprietor of all we must give account. "It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful," says St. Paul. 1 Cor. 4, 2. Nor is there any chance to escape detection, if any of the Master's goods are wasted. Among men that is possible. A knave may succeed in concealing his dishonest practices from the eyes of his earthly master, and may long live in unrighteous luxury by secretly wasting his employer's goods. But God is not deceived. He seeth the heart, and not a thought or wish, much less a word or work, can be hidden from His all-seeing eye. The time must come, sooner or later, when His voice shall be heard, must be heard, "Give an account of thy stewardship." There is no possibility of avoiding it. There is absolutely no way of escaping it. "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things

done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." The consequences of unfaithfulness in our stewardship are dreadful. The judgment of the Lord is just, and the doom of the unrighteous is terrible; they shall awake on that great day of account "to shame and everlasting contempt." Heed therefore the warning which our Lord in mercy gives. There is time yet for changing your course, if you have thus far neglected or despised your Master's will and wasted His goods; and in His infinite love there is a way prepared for escaping the consequences of your unfaithfulness. Repent, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance. "To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Your probation is not yet past; the day of grace still continues. "I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God; wherefore turn yourselves and live ye." Ezek. 18, 30–32. See that the terrible words be not addressed to you by the Lord and Judge of all: "Thou mayest be no longer steward."

2. But our text contains a further warning. "Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill and

sit down quickly and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill and write fourscore." The steward had wasted his lord's goods and been found unfaithful. Now when he was found out and the punishment was declared, he makes provision for the emergency on the same line of unfaithfulness. He has not learned to work and has no disposition to learn. That way of setting things right seems to him impracticable: "I cannot dig." The other way is to appeal to the charity of others and obtain their assistance in his distress. But that is a humiliating way, and he is too proud to adopt such an expedient. "To beg I am ashamed." Therefore he resorts to fraud. He calls his master's debtors together and has them lower their bills. They will thus have so much less to pay, and will feel under obligations to him for the reduction. He lays his plans with skill, assuming reasonably that when the master dismisses him from his stewardship the friends whom he has won by his favors will receive him into their houses, so that he need neither dig nor beg. And this plan is seemingly successful. So far as it concerns the present life, to which the story of the parable is necessarily confined, it works well. Hence the unjust steward is commended for his prudence.

And yet we find a solemn warning in the narrative. The life of man extends beyond these earthly scenes. The steward provides for the present. He has made friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, who will take him into their houses when he loses his earthly position. But he has made no friends who will receive him into everlasting habitations when his earthly life fails. He has shrewdly made friends for time; he has neglected to make friends for eternity. He did the best that was to be done without changing his course and becoming a just and faith-

ful steward; but the best that can be done in such a course must end in failure.

We are all stewards, and in many ways we have been found unfaithful to our Lord, whose we are and whom we serve. The danger of being rejected stares us in the face. What shall we do? Shall we dig, or shall we beg, or shall we cheat?

In the realm of the spiritual we can hope for nothing by our work. That will not restore to our Lord the goods we have wasted. It will not pay our debt to Him. It will not even secure us sustenance in future, supposing that we had no debt. Nay, more: "I cannot dig," if the Master rejects me. All spiritual life and health and strength come from Him. "Without me ye can do nothing," He tells us. John 15, 5. "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me." To think of rectifying all our unfaithfulness and maintaining ourselves spiritually by our works, is supreme folly. "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Rom. 3, 20. The most earnest efforts to carry out the instructions which the Lord has given us as His stewards only result in shortcoming and transgression. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God," and deserve the sentence: "Thou mayest be no longer steward." No amount of zeal or work will atone for the sins of the past or avail for our justification in the present or in the future.

Shall we then imitate the unjust steward and seek to accomplish by fraud what we cannot effect by our strength or our work? That, too, is hopeless. His persistence in wrong-doing stands as a warning, however successfully, so far as the present life is concerned, he worked out his scheme. The Lord cannot be deceived, and no trickery will secure the desired result in spite of His righteous judgment. A

rich man may be outwitted by his servant, who may by the abuse of his trust provide for his livelihood after he is discharged. But that will not apply to the Lord of all. He dismisses for ever. The wages of sin is death. When He calls us to account we can hide nothing and keep nothing. The sinner can have no refuge against the Lord who owns all things and knows all things, and who will call His servants to account for all things. If he rejects the Lord of all he can make no provision, neither by strength nor by cunning, against the time when the Lord rejects Him.

Therefore there is nothing left for us but to beg,—to beg of Him, too, whose goods we have wasted and whose sentence of dismissal from our stewardship would be strictly just. There is nothing left us but to beg, because we can do nothing to atone for our faults or to support our lives; there is nothing left us but to beg of Him whom we have wronged, because He alone has the power and the means to help us. Therefore we can only cast ourselves upon His mercy, and beg of Him to pardon our unrighteousness, to continue us in His service notwithstanding our unworthiness, and to give us meat and drink although we have deserved deposal and death. If we are ashamed to do that, there is no help for us. To whom should we go but to our Lord? He only has the words of eternal life. But if we humble ourselves in the consciousness of our sin and our helplessness and trust in His mercy, we shall not be spurned from His feet. He has offered His life as a ransom for all; He has suffered the penalty of all our unrighteousness; He has in His infinite mercy prepared a way for our justification through His blood. Be warned against all attempts to provide for your lives in the way of all unrighteousness, and trust in the way of righteousness which He has provided.

II. But the unjust steward presents an example as well as a warning. He is an example in the earnest atten-

tion which He gives to his precarious situation, and in the prudent effort which he makes to meet the emergency by employing all the means at his command.

1. When the charge of wasting his lord's goods was raised against him, he at once realized his condition and gave it his immediate thought. "Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do?" This was not the wild questioning of helpless despair, but the sober reflection of a mind intent upon finding some means of escape from the difficulty. "I am resolved what to do." That is the result of his reflection upon the subject.

What a blessed thing it would be if men generally, when their shortcoming and transgression of God's law are pointed out and the accusation of unfaithfulness is raised against them, would follow the unjust steward in this regard, and give the matter the immediate and earnest attention which it merits! There is no subject of greater importance for this life, and there is none at all approaching it in importance for the life to come, and yet how many are not willing to give it even a sober thought! The law is preached among us and shows us our unrighteousness; nay, more: it reveals to us the wrath of God against all unrighteousness, and warns us to prepare to meet Him; and yet men are so absorbed in the things of this world that they will not hear, much less heed it and act in accordance with what they hear. Is it a light thing that every day proves our unfaithfulness in the administration of the goods committed to us? Are there not countless numbers even in lands where the Word of God is regularly preached, who have never realized their dreadful condition of sin and death, and who, notwithstanding the eternal importance attaching to the subject, have never asked "What shall I do?" and have therefore never come to the decision expressed in the words, "I am resolved what to do." Much would be gained if

the matter once received the attention necessary to excite such a question and lead to such a resolve. If there are any here to-day who have neglected these things, may the grace of God induce them to be reasonable and at least give some serious attention to a subject so grave. You have failed to keep the Lord's law, and the sentence is passed against you: are you going to treat the whole matter with indifference and not even to give it a sober thought? That is surely not worthy of rational creatures. Something must be done, or you shall perish: what will you do? And even many who profess to be followers of Jesus and to rest all their hopes upon Him, treat the matter as they would not treat one involving their money or their earthly life. Every day declares our delinquency in the duties of our stewardship, and yet how many are there not who feel no concern on that account, and never think that one of these days they may be dismissed from their stewardship because they are ever failing and never implore mercy! Come, let us reason together. If you waste your Master's goods, must you not give account to Him of your stewardship? If you fail to carry out His holy will, must He not hold you responsible? And has He not warned you of the consequences of sin? Have you realized this, and having been found wanting so often, have you resolved what to do? There is mercy for us all in our dear Redeemer; but do you daily come to Him that you may have life? Ponder the matter well. Give earnest heed to it, and make sure every day that all is well between you as stewards and your Lord to whom you must give account.

2. But the unjust steward is an example to us also in another respect, which is expressly mentioned in our text. "The lord commended the unjust steward because he had done wisely; for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." You

will keep in mind that our text is a parable; that is, a short story of earthly things by which heavenly things are imaged and illustrated. The lord who commended the unjust steward is the rich man whom he served, not our Lord who narrates the story. It is important to observe this, else we might be led to think that the Savior commends the narrow wisdom which does not take eternity into the account and which, while it does the best that can be done within the limits of the temporal, is after all mere folly because it overlooks the eternal. But even the rich man who was lord of the steward in the parable does not commend the unrighteous transaction in lowering the bills and partially dispensing the debtors from the payment of what they justly owe. He merely commends the prudent forethought which realizes the situation and carefully selects means to meet the emergency. Not that he had done unjustly, but that he had done wisely, is commended. And our Lord adds the remark that the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light, that He might impress the lesson upon our minds. All experience shows the truth of the saying. When men have a project to advance their temporal interests or gratify their carnal desires, they are thoughtful in the choice and adaptation of means to secure it and zealous in doing the necessary work; but when the Lord tells His people of glorious ends to be attained in the eternal welfare of men, how few give the subject earnest thought, and how slow His people are in furnishing the means and doing the work necessary for its accomplishment! The world shows more prudence and more zeal in reaching its objects than the people of God do in attaining those objects which He presents, and which involve the eternal salvation of men. It is humiliating, but it is true. Let us see that we become wiser in our generation. The unjust steward planned well and worked well from his point of view; let us, while

we avoid his unrighteousness and trickery, plan well and work well from a point of view that is far higher and far nobler.

Then we shall be able to use wisely and well even those temporal means on which the children of this world mainly depend. In closing the narrative our Lord applies it in the words: "And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail they may receive you into everlasting habitations." As the unjust steward used the mammon of unrighteousness for his selfish and wordly ends, so we are to use our money and other gifts for the ends which God appoints and which are those of righteousness and love. They belong to our Lord, and we shall be faithful stewards only when we use them according to His will and to the glory of His great name. This implies the avoidance of avarice and waste, both of which result from the selfishness that regards not the claims of the Lord upon all that we have, and usurps His rights and authority. It implies furthermore the practice of that charity which looks to the spiritual and temporal welfare of all. A wise use of the mammon which the sin of man has brought into the service of unrighteousness, and which is therefore called the mammon of unrighteousness, will look first to the spiritual interests of man, and therefore support the Church and all her institutions, designed to bring the Gospel to men and save their souls through the grace which it offers. Then the bodily wants of the poor will be supplied. Money will thus be saved and employed for the purposes of love and righteousness, as we are commanded: "Let him that stole, steal no more; but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." Eph. 4, 28. Thus shall we make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when we fail they may receive us into everlasting habita-

tions. For our Lord has told us that what we do to our brethren we do unto Him, and our work of faith and labor of love will not go unrewarded. Being cleansed by the blood of Jesus through faith in His name, we shall be welcomed by Him into the eternal mansions, and His brethren, who were recipients of our bounty, shall be witnesses in our behalf and receive us with joy.

Therefore, brethren beloved, be ye faithful unto death, and ye shall receive the crown of life. Amen.

Tenth Sunday after Trinity.

LUKE 19, 41–48.

And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation. And He went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought: saying unto them, It is written, My house is a house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves. And He taught daily in the temple. But the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy Him, and could not find what they might do: for all the people were very attentive to hear Him.

Dear Brethren:

We read in the Scriptures of two occasions on which our Savior wept. One was when He beheld the grief of the sisters at Lazarus' death. Their hearts were breaking with sorrow at their loss, and their suffering touched the loving heart of Jesus. The other was when, on His last journey to Jerusalem, He looked upon the city. For He looked not upon it as men are accustomed to look upon cities, viewing with delight their displays of human skill and human pride. The grandeur of art and the glitter of wealth was not what attracted His eye. He saw a vast assemblage of human beings whom He came to save, and who refused to heed His call of love and His cry of warning. It was pitiful, and Jesus wept over the doomed city that knew not the time of its visitation and neglected the things which belonged to its peace. The Savior does

not literally weep now. He is exalted above all the sorrow which finds vent in tears. But His love continues on for ever, and His desire to save the lost has not ceased or been diminished. And where men now do not consider the message of His love, and go on in the path of sin that leads to destruction, the tears which He shed over Jerusalem are still an admonition to hear and heed the Redeemer's appeal, and not to neglect the great salvation which He offers. The time of our visitation has come. How do we profit by it? Let me warn you to-day not to despise the mercy of your Lord and not to trifle with your immortal souls. To this end let us devoutly consider

THE NEGLECT OF THE THINGS WHICH BELONG TO OUR PEACE.

We shall point out 1. *How such neglect is shown*, and 2. *What are its consequences*. May the Lord give us grace to be attentive hearers.

I. Our text shows how Jerusalem neglected the things which belong to its peace, in that it did not know them, in that it professed to attend to them while inwardly it was careless about them, and in that it persecuted the Lord who sought to impress them. In all these respects the world still goes on in the wicked ways of Jerusalem and needs the solemn warning which our text contains.

1. "When He was come near, He beheld the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." Our Savior had sent to them His messengers to preach repentance, and had Himself proclaimed to the city the good tidings of salvation from sin and death. But the people disregarded the solemn call and the earnest appeal. They preferred the beggarly elements of this world, and sought

their happiness in the things that perish. The day of their visitation came when the Gospel was announced to them, and they refused to know it and profit by it. That was their crying sin and brought on their terrible doom. Therefore our Lord plaintively cries: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!" Luke 13, 34. It was not that they had no opportunity to hear and know the gospel of salvation, but having ears to hear they did not hear, though it was sounded in their ears. It was not that God had antecedently purposed their destruction and therefore would not give them the needed grace to repent and live: the record says that He would, but they would not. He brought to them all that was necessary for their salvation, but they declined to accept it. They knew not the things which belong to their peace, and did not want to know them. That was the reason why Jesus wept over Jerusalem.

With the same mercy the Lord visits the children of men still. He has come to lay down His life as a ransom for all, and the gracious work of redemption is finished. He sends forth His messengers still to invite sinners to come to Him and be saved through faith in the blood shed for them. "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." 2 Cor.

5, 18–21. There is nothing in all the earth that is comparable in importance to this proclamation for all of us, and God is not only willing that we should have the benefit of its wealth of blessing, but He beseeches us not to turn away from it. The same loving Lord who sought to gather the people of Jerusalem as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings, entreats us to come and partake of His heavenly peace and joy. And what is the result? Countless thousands refuse to hear and neglect the things which belong to their peace, though they are eagerly intent upon the things of earth which profit not and satisfy not. "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!" O men and brethren, hear the Word of the Lord in this the day of your visitation, and neglect no longer the things which belong to your peace. Hear the Word that brings life and salvation. Hear the Word; without it there is no help and no hope for you. Hear it now; consider it well; let it be your meditation when you go home; it will bring peace to your souls. Be wise to-day, and neglect not so great salvation.

2. But there are some who outwardly hear and profess to follow the Savior, and yet neglect the things which belong to their peace. Our text says: "He went into the temple and cast out them that sold therein and them that bought, saying unto them, It is written, my house is the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves." It was a convenience to have the things needed for sacrifices in the courts of the temple, and it was profitable to expose them there for sale. The convenience led many to offer sacrifices who otherwise might have neglected it, and the priests seemed thus to encourage worship while they reaped their share of the profit. But the whole business, though it did not seem so wicked, nay, even had the appearance of piety, was an abomination. It was the

mammon of unrighteousness that instigated the traffic in the holy place, and the effect was the encouragement of a worship of form without the spirit which gives it reality. Priest and people went to the temple with motives of worldly gain, and truth and righteousness were ignored and their claims disregarded. The temple thus became a den of thieves instead of a house of prayer. The money changers robbed men in their greed for gain, and robbed God by stealing the hearts away from the worship and leaving only the empty form. If only the gift was offered, there was no concern about obedience to the divine command. Therefore our Lord says: "Ye have made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth and honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Matt. 15, 6–9. Such people may seem to be worshipers of the living God, because their outward action is that of worship; but they neglect the things which belong to their peace, because their hearts are far from God and bow not in reverence to His Word.

Such neglect is frequent also in our day. The number of those is great who have a name to live and are dead. All around us we see people pursuing the same course as did those whom our Lord cast out of the temple. The buying and selling at church fairs and suppers has not even the excuse which could be offered by those whose money-mongering desecrated the temple and drew on them the wrath of Jehovah. They could at least put forth the plea that the articles sold could be used in the regular service for sacrifice, whilst nowadays they minister mostly to the lust of the flesh and the pride of life. The Lord does not want our eating and drinking, our fun and frolic in His holy temple, nor even our money, except so far as

we are cheerful givers to the glory of His name, but wants our hearts. Not even the forms of worship are acceptable in His sight when it is a mere lip-service. All our prayers and praises, all our running to and fro in the restless effort to perform good works, all our crying, Lord, Lord, are vanity when the Savior is not embraced by living faith as our Savior, and His Word is not honored as supreme authority. O friends, abandon all thoughts of finding peace in your own efforts and devices and performances, and turn with all your hearts to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. All other helps will be found a refuge of lies. "Therefore also now, saith the Lord, Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting and with weeping and with mourning; and rend your heart and not your garment, and turn unto the Lord your God; for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness." Joel 2, 12. 13. Embrace your Savior by faith and ye shall find peace unto your souls; then you will worship Him in the beauty of holiness, and your worship shall be acceptable to Him whom your hearts trust and adore.

3. Our text mentions still another form in which the neglect of the things belonging to our peace becomes manifest. It says of Jesus that "He taught daily in the temple; but the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy Him." That is marvelous. He came as a teacher from God with all the credentials which reasonable men could ask. He appealed to the Scriptures which these people possessed and professed to reverence. He showed how Moses and the prophets testified of Him, and how in Him the prophecies were fulfilled. He wrought miracles in attestation of His divine mission. He taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes. His teaching commended itself to every man's conscience and brought the tidings which every man's soul needed for

its peace and consolation. And yet they not only would not consider these things, but turned in rage against Him and sought to destroy Him. Is it not wonderful? He loved them even unto death, and they hated Him for it. O the depth of human depravity! "This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish." James 1, 15. No wonder that Jesus wept over such a city, and that the wrath of God burst in terror upon it when it resisted every offer of mercy and hardened itself in sin.

And are there men now yet, in this age of light, who are thus wicked in the neglect of the things which belong to their peace? Alas, yes! The fools that have said in their hearts, There is no God, have not all disappeared from the earth; neither have the slaves of Satan, who boast of their liberty and declare that they will not have this man to reign over them. There are multitudes to-day who, some in the rage of passion and some in the garb of reason, seek to destroy Christ and the Church and are unwearied in their persecution. That such men are not seeking the things which belong to their peace needs not be said. They are waging a bootless warfare against the Savior of the world and only compassing their own destruction. "Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall He speak to them in His wrath and vex them in His sore displeasure. Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." Ps. 2, 1–5. The malice of the foe shall not destroy our Savior King and His blessed kingdom. His people need not be troubled. The gates of hell shall not prevail against the

Church. It shall stand when all the kingdoms of this world shall have crumbled to dust. But whilst Christians enjoy this comfort, let those who oppose be warned. Their work of hostility to the Lord and the souls of men shall be baffled, and their ruin must come unless they repent. The time of grace continues yet to-day: to-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.

II. The consequences of neglecting the things which belong to our peace are indicated. Such neglect brings temporal calamity, hardening of heart, eternal misery. Let us look at these, that the lesson may be the more deeply impressed upon our hearts.

1. Our Lord says to reckless and stubborn Jerusalem, "The days shall come upon thee that thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." Sin must bring trouble. It is disorder and introduces disorder. It is in conflict with the plan of God, and righteousness must crush it. No sin can escape the curse; no sinner can avoid burial in the ruin, unless he flees for refuge to the hope set before him in Christ. The consequences of sin are eternal. It brings misery for ever. But because it entails misery always, the consequences become manifest also in this world. It is true, God sometimes permits the wicked to flourish here, and seemingly to fare better than the righteous. He has His purpose in this. He doeth all things well, and makes everything work together for good to them that love Him. The goodness of God shown to the ungodly may lead them to repentance; the tribulations endured by His children work out an eternal weight of glory. We cannot see into the profound depths of God's providental dealings with men. But we can see

that the wages of sin is death, and that even on this earth calamities follow in its train. So it is in the case before us. Jerusalem neglected the things which belonged to its peace, and it suffered the dreadful consequences here, as the impenitent people are suffering its dreadful consequences in the eternal world. Thirty-eight years after the words of our Lord in the text were spoken, the Romans besieged the city. Vast numbers had assembled there from other places to keep the great feast of unleavened bread. Dissensions occurred, famine and pestilence came, and the suffering was beyond the power of words to describe. Thousands perished in the horror of hunger and disease and bloodshed. Then followed the destruction of the doomed city, and literally not one stone was left upon another. The calamity is still mentioned in history as unparalleled in the annals of death and destruction. Behold the severity of an angry God towards people who will not heed the offers of mercy, but harden themselves in their resistance to the Savior.

Nor should we imagine that rebellion against Him can now be carried on with impunity. Many a plague has come upon communities because of their persistent refusal to hear the word of the Lord. Many a nation has fallen because its sin came up as a stench in the nostrils of the great King, whose warnings were unheeded. Many a time has the Lord sent war and pestilence and famine among the people because of their sin, and have fire and flood been the instruments of His justice to punish transgressors who despised wisdom and spurned His grace. All the powers of nature are at His command, and He employs them to execute His will. Thus saith the Lord: "I will punish them that dwell in the land of Egypt, as I have punished Jerusalem, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence." Jer. 44, 13. The same God who ruled then has the government in His hands still, and

will not now, as He did not then, suffer wrong to triumph. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Gal. 6 7. And although the punishments administered in God's providence are not visibly meted out according to the guilt of the wicked, so that we could infer the degree of sin from the degree of suffering, the fact is still the same, that God rules and sin brings suffering even in this life, leading often to the destruction of individuals and of cities and of nations. Into the mysteries of divine providence we cannot penetrate, but the warnings of the Lord we can hear, and they that are wise will profit by them and escape the threatened ruin. These we should heed all the more as we know not the hour nor the day when the final crash, of which the destruction of Jerusalem is an image, shall come upon us. "Seeing then that all those things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." 2 Pet. 3, 11. 12.

2. But the compensations of God are not limited to this earthly habitation. His judgments extend beyond the present life. What is sown here bears eternal fruit. The neglect of the things which belong to our peace, if persisted in, will not only bring trouble in time, but misery in eternity. And the longer it is persisted in, the more difficult it becomes to escape the coming wrath. The consequence of continuance in refusing to hear the Lord's call and in resisting His grace is that hardening of the heart which shuts out all hope of amendment and final deliverance from the curse. "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." That is

terrible, that these things were placed before their eyes and they could not see them. Do not give ear to the wild fancy that this was because the Lord had pleasure in the death of these wicked people and withheld from them all light and all power to repent and believe. That was the Lord's complaint, that they would not see the light and would not hear the message of mercy offering them salvation. Therefore He wept over Jerusalem. He would help them, and they would not be helped, but hardened their hearts against His teaching and entreaty.

And so it is still. Those who turn away from the Gospel, notwithstanding that their own consciences admonish them to consider its claims and warn them against neglecting its gracious offers and appeals, gradually become more and more indisposed to hear it, and every day diminishes the likelihood that they will turn from the error of their way. Many a person has carelessly heard and wilfully declined to consider what fell upon his ear, until he became a settled enemy of the truth and sought to destroy Christ and the Church. It is dangerous to disregard the truth which is written for our learning and preached for our salvation. Every act of resistance renders the soul harder to win for Jesus, and when the conscience is violated and the Spirit is grieved too long, the Lord withdraws His help, and blindness and obduracy must be the dreadful consequence. The Lord is not mocked in this respect either. When men are determined not to hear, He gives them over to hardness of heart, and they die in their sins because they would not permit Him, in whom alone is help, to save them. "For this cause God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." 2 Thess, 2, 11. 12. Therefore hear the Word of the Lord now, before your

neglect become habitual and your hearts become hardened. Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation. Attend to these things to-day, lest to-morrow they should be hid from thine eyes.

3. The result of that would be everlasting woe. The soul that continues in its sin must die. The wrath of God is upon it, and His judgments pursue it for ever. How could it be otherwise? Blind reason takes all sorts of exception to the doctrine of eternal punishment; but how could it be otherwise? The soul lives for ever, and if the help that is offered through the Gospel is spurned, it lives for ever in its sin. And God remains for ever the same just and righteous God, whose holiness cannot endure sin, but is in opposition to it a consuming fire. The punishment cannot cease while the sin continues. Therefore the wages of sin is everlasting death. It can not in the nature of things be otherwise. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment," says our Lord. The impenitent sinner rebels against his God, and he cannot be the victor in such a contest. The Lord shall triumph. If men will not hear, that His grace may triumph in their hearts and render them willing subjects in His kingdom of grace, they must hear the dreadful sentence of everlasting death, in which His righteousness triumphs over iniquity. God is not mocked: whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." John 3, 36.

O my hearers, let the warning of this day's gospel not be given in vain. Neglect not the things which belong to your peace. The Savior calls you again to-day: let not His arms be stretched out and His appeals be made to you in vain. Flee from the wrath to come. Lay hold on eternal life. It is offered you without money and without price in His Word. Hear it and learn it. Be very attentive to

hear Him. What He proclaims is not the condemnation which you deserve; it is the pardon which He has merited by the shedding of His blood. Hear Him gladly, and follow Him. He will give you peace, He will bring you to the home of eternal peace. Amen.

Eleventh Sunday after Trinity.

LUKE 18, 9–14.

And He spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Dear Brethren in Christ:

Not all those who are without God and without hope in the world are found in the ranks of the scoffers at Christ and Christianity. There are many who outwardly join the people of God without being inwardly identified with them. St. Paul speaks of some "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." 2 Tim. 3, 5. And our Savior Himself tells us: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Matt. 7, 21. Professing religion or joining the church is therefore not all that is requisite to please God and attain salvation. In our text we have a specimen of those who seem extremely religious, but whose whole worship is an abomination to God. The proud Pharisee is set in contrast with the humble publican, whose worship is sincere and acceptable in the Lord's sight. The truth is thus exemplified which St. Peter expresses in the words:

"God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble." 1 Pet. 5, 5. "For every one that exalteth himself," our Lord says in applying the parable before us, "shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Those who seek to justify themselves are left in their sin and misery, and are cast down to the pit of eternal death. Those who despair of their own righteousness and throw themselves upon the mercy of God are justified and exalted to the inheritance of the saints in light. Let us learn the wisdom of God which is thus taught us, and consider

THE WAY OF JUSTIFICATION

as it is illustrated 1. *By contrast in the Pharisee*, and 2. *By example in the publican.*

I. Our Lord "spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others." Righteousness we must have in order to enter heaven. The unrighteous are condemned. Only the righteous shall enter into life eternal. The error of the Pharisee was therefore not that he sought to be righteous. That is necessary. No man can please God or find rest without doing that. But the Pharisee took the wrong way for it. He trusted in himself that he was righteous. His course shows how the sinner is not justified before God. It stands in contrast with the true way of justification, and its errors help us to understand this true way, and serve as a warning against the false way. He axalts himself, he despises others, he claims merit before God; therefore he is not justified, but remains in his sin and under the curse.

1. "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess."

He thus exalted himself instead of casting himself humbly at the feet of Jesus. It is not said that he was in his own nature worse than other men, and should therefore have esteemed the extortioners and adulterers better than himself. That is not the point to be considered first. Before any comparison can be justly made with others we must know our own condition. Prior to any consideration of the question whether others are worse than ourselves we must realize the fact that we are bad. No man is just before God; all are worthy of condemnation in His sight. "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant," says the psalmist; "for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified." Ps. 142, 2. Man is in such a condition by nature that condemnation is his due. He is not just, and he cannot justify himself. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Rom. 3, 23. This the Pharisee did not realize. He was righteous in His own eyes, while in the eyes of God he was unrighteous. He saw himself in the illusory light of his own proud imagination; God saw him as he really was—poor, naked, blind, wretched. And because he deceived himself, and thought himself to be something when he was nothing, he refused the only help that could avail him. A man that is righteous in his own eyes will not seek other righteousness and will not accept it when it is offered. In his own estimation he does not need it. He is offended at the very intimation that he needs it. It is an insult to him to suggest that he is in the same condition as the extortioners, unjust, adulterers. He thanks God that he is not like them, and that he does not need justification like them. He can help himself, and that excludes all divine help. His vain conceit of himself is his ruin. He is sick unto death, and must die, because he thinks himself well and spurns the very thought of needing a physician. Seemingly devout and going into the temple to pray, he yet renounces the very spirit and

burden of all true prayer; for the substance of his whole boastful eulogy of himself is that he has satisfied all the claims of righteousness, and more too. He asks nothing of God, and although in form he thanks God, in reality he thanks Him that he has nothing to thank Him for. His self-exaltation closes every avenue of grace. Let the proud Pharisee stand as a warning to us, my brethren, that Satan may not by the same way of imaginary righteousness prevent us from attaining and retaining the reality —the righteousness which is of God by faith.

2. That such a proud spirit should despise others is but a natural consequence of his self-conceit and self-exaltation. He trusted in himself that he was righteous, and therefore thanked God that he was not as other men are, whose extortion and injustice and adultery he could perceive, though he could not perceive his own. For that which blinds us to our own sin by no means renders us blind to the sins of others. On the contrary, the more we see ourselves in the rosy light of our own vain imagination, the more will we see others in the gloom of uncharitableness. It is a fond conceit of ourselves, not of other people, that deceives us; and this very exaltation of self implies the depreciation of others in order to maintain the illusion of our own excellence and superiority. Exorbitant love of self is giving to self what is due to others, and must thus far detract from the esteem which is their due. To one highly exalted others seem little, as from his height he looks down on them. Moreover, to one who knows not the sinfulness of his own heart and judges men by their external conduct, the difference between degrees of sin will appear as the difference between righteousness and unrighteousness. The murderer will seem a worse man than the robber, and the robber worse than the pilferer. It is therefore easily accounted for that a mere formalist, who has never by the law obtained the

knowledge of sin nor by the Gospel experienced the power of grace, should thank God that He is not a murderer, though he be by no means scrupulously honest in his dealings with his fellow men. And if he be a worshiper in the temple, like the Pharisee, and therefore by no means to be classed with the vulgar rabble who despise the church and waste their substance in riotous living, it is not surprising that he by comparison accounts himself righteous, and looks with all the more contempt upon the grossly vicious, because they are not noble-minded enough to become virtuous like himself. Relatively they are worse, considered from a mere human point of view. But the radical error lies in the ignorance of sin, and the consequent rejection of grace as if it were unnecessary. He that exalts himself will naturally despise other poor sinners, because he trusts in himself that he is righteous, while he sees that others are not. Brethren, when you once know your sin and need of justification by grace, you will have enough to bewail and to despise in yourselves, and will be inclined to pity others. Learn of the Pharisee what to avoid, if ye earnestly desire to be justified.

3. But not only did the Pharisee in his self-conceit think that he had satisfied all the demands of justice. He imagined that he had even done more. He had performed works of supererogation. He makes his boast, and that before his God, that he had done more than the law requires. "I fast twice in the week." The law really required fasting but once a year, on the great day of atonement. But he was one of the strictest of the straitest sect, and scrupulously kept his fast for two days every week. For this God was in his debt, according to his self-righteous view of the matter. "I give tithes of all that I possess." That was another item in his account against God. The law did require tithes. It was commanded that one-tenth of the fruit of the field and the produce of the cattle should

be given to the Lord for the service of the tabernacle. That was the inheritance of the Levites. But this punctilious Pharisee did more than that. He paid tithes of all that he possessed, even the small matters which the law did not have in view. Our Lord refers to such scrupulous observances when He says: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith." Matt. 23, 23. So far as mercy and faith had no formulated prescription, the Pharisee could not understand them and would not practice them. How could he be expected to do a work that is not required by an express rule and command, though the law of love required it? He had not the faith and love that would inwardly necessitate it, and he would feel no guilt if, in the absence of explicit requirement, he did not perform it. All the more was he intent on an exact performance of the work which was required by law; and that there might be no possibility of charging him with dereliction, or of depriving him of the self-complacency which he felt in his own righteousness, he did a great deal in addition to that which was commanded. That rendered the Lord his debtor, as the subject presented itself to his mind, and he therefore comes boastfully before his God. He trusted in himself that he was righteous even above the righteousness of the law. And all the while he was unconscious of the sin that was drowning him in perdition. O, my hearers, take warning, and let not the malice of the devil succeed in compassing your destruction by instilling the foolish thought that you have fulfilled the law by any outward observances, or that you have done even more than this, and have superfluous merit before God. That is the way of condemnation, not of justification.

4 The proud Pharisee was not justified, but perished in his sin. True, the text says that the publican went down

justified rather than the Pharisee, and thus is capable of the interpretation that the latter was also in some sense or in some degree justified. But it does not say that and does not mean that. For, in the first place, the reason given for the difference shows that the result could not be in both cases substantially the same. The one was justified rather than the other, because "every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." The Pharisee was abased, not exalted like the humble publican. Secondly, justification is an act of God that is completed at once. It has no degrees. The sinner is either condemned or pardoned. If one sin remained that is not forgiven, that would be his condemnation, for by that he would be guilty of the whole law. It is therefore against the Scriptures to speak of a partial justification of the Pharisee as against the total justification of the publican. There is no partial justification in the court of heaven. Thirdly, the language does not indicate that the Pharisee was also justified. When the psalmist says, "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man," it does not mean that we should put our trust in man, but greater trust in God. It means that we should not trust in men, who are unable to help us. But, finally, if even we assume that the Pharisee was justified also, though not in the same way as the publican, the sense must still be that the former was not justified before God. Indeed, although the form of expression is not unusual in the Scriptures to designate opposition, so that the one is justified and the other not, it may have been chosen with reference to the fact that one is justified in his own sight while the other is justified in the sight of God, so that the publican has a justification better than the Pharisee, who, though he trusted in himself that he was righteous and justified himself, had before God no righteousness and no justification at all. In his vain

imagination that he needed none he rejected all divine help, and the wrath of God remained upon him. He went down into condemnation; for of that he was worthy, and all grace and mercy he spurned. Let us beware of such a way of justification, such a foolish way of self-justification, which can only bring damnation, and seek the true way which is revealed in the Gospel.

II. That true way is illustrated by the example of the publican. He makes no pretensions to righteousness and claims no merit, but in all his actions manifests deep humility, confesses that he is not righteous, but a sinner, cries for mercy to deliver him from his iniquity and its just consequences, and goes down to his house justified. Learn from his example how the poor sinner, who has no righteousness in himself, is justified before God.

1. "The publican standing afar off would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." His attitude and gestures indicate the humble spirit of one who feels his unworthiness. He stood afar off, because in his consciousness of guilt he felt unfit to approach the holy place. Not that he was afar from the Holy One; for "the Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." Ps. 34, 18. But he knew the holiness of God as he knew his sin, and would not presume to press nearer His awful Majesty. And in the same lowly feeling "he would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven." His state of mind is expressed in the words of Ezra: "O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to Thee, my God; for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens." Ezra 9, 6. He has looked into his own heart and seen how its depravity contrasts with the purity of the Lord, and is ashamed to look up. "O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto Thee, but unto us confusion

of faces." Dan. 9, 7. And in this condition of his soul the poor publican "smote upon his breast," as an outward sign of his inward grief and self-condemnation. All his actions show that he felt guilty before God. Such actions are not essential, and we do not refer to them as though they could secure the sinner's justification before God. No outward work is indispensable to salvation. God looketh upon the heart. It would be a grave error therefore to maintain that only those can please God who stand afar off in the temple and cast down their eyes and smite upon their breasts. There is many a contrite soul that gives no such sign. And it would be an error also to infer that wherever there are such signs the heart must needs be right. They can be learned and imitated by men who are not sincere. Do not lay too much stress on such externals. But they are the proper expression of that which the heart feels, and as such they are worthy of notice. A man may imitate the publican's actions and be a hypocrite, but his actions were a sincere expression of his soul's contrition, as we learn from his confession and from our Lord's words pronouncing him justified. Take him therefore as an example, and lay off the arrogance and haughtiness of self-conceit and walk humbly before your God.

2. The publican had no boast to make of virtues and good deeds and merits, but penitently confessed his sinfulness. He had learned to know himself, not by a comparison with other men, which might have shown his superiority in many things, but by the law of God, which requires perfect holiness and leaves no room for excuse. They who have the grace to see themselves as they are, know the corruption of their own hearts and find no cause for self-complacency, but reason for only self-accusation and self-condemnation. They do not think of others then, but of themselves, and as they see in themselves what they cannot see in others, because they cannot look into others'

hearts as they can into their own, they must appear to them as the chief of sinners. He who yet thinks himself inwardly better than other men, except so far as the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit, for which all the glory is given to divine grace, has made him better, has not yet become thoroughly acquainted with his own sinful heart, and does not yet despair of himself so that he casts himself wholly upon the divine mercy. In the publican the law has done its work. He has the knowledge of sin. Therefore his confession is not merely of that general sort which is so often made without a realization of its import. There are not a few who chime in with the statement that all men are sinners, and make no hesitation to acknowledge that they too are such when the confession is put in this universal form, but who have not the least disposition to admit the truth when it is individually applied. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God," is conceded; but when the individual is taken separately and accused of his sinfulness, the charge is offensive and is resented as unwarranted and unjust. The publican did not thus trifle with words, and seek to hide himself in the multitude. His confession was personal. His cry was, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Be others what they may, I am a sinner that has need of mercy. That is the condition, brethren, to which man must come, if he would find peace. That is the way of justification. There is no forgiveness of sin and no eternal life without repentance, and there is no repentance, no sorrow for sin, as long as the soul is not conscious of its depravity and its damnableness. Learn therefore by the law to know your sin and your doom, and present yourselves before God as worthless and helpless, that you may be saved by grace. For "if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is

faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1, 8. 9.

3. The publican cried to God for mercy. He made no effort to cloak his sin and none to excuse it. He recognized that he was worthy of condemnation. But he did not on that account despair. He knew that God is holy and cannot tolerate sin, but he trusted in the mercy revealed to the sinner. Not as though God's mercy would override His justice, and He could let the demands of righteousness go unsatisfied for the sake of His love. They have no proper knowledge of God who think thus of Him. He is not like the weak mother who gives commands to her child and then threatens punishment for disobedience, but whose heart fails her when the transgression is committed and the penalty is to be inflicted. The divine justice can never be set aside by any such sentimentality. It must be satisfied. It can never be relaxed or nullified or defeated. There was no hope for the publican on any such grounds. But there was hope for him in the mercy of God still, and he trusted in that mercy as it was and is revealed to man in the Holy Scriptures. He trusted in the sure mercies of David. For He who sat on David's throne and had an everlasting kingdom was the Redeemer of the world, and all the ends of the earth can find salvation in Him. The redemption which is in Christ Jesus availed for him as it avails for us. The Lamb of God hath taken away the sins of the world, and the satisfaction which justice demands was rendered in His holy life and death. Those who trust in Him shall never be put to shame. For God so loved the world, not that he would let sin go unpunished and justice be trampled upon, but that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. The publican believed, and was justified by faith. For trusting in the mercy of God through Christ, who has paid our penalty

in our stead, is believing, and he that believeth shall be saved. "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe." Rom. 3, 20–22. The publican had nothing whereof to boast before God, and he knew it; he had no merit, and he claimed none; he had nothing but sin, and in the profound consciousness of his unworthiness and helplessness he fled for refuge to the hope set before him in the mercy of God. He humbled himself and was exalted. O brethren, learn from his example the true way of justification, and seek no other help but the mercy of God in Christ.

4. For the humble publican was accepted of God, while the proud Pharisee was rejected. "I tell you," says our Lord, "this man went down to his house justified." This is the comforting conclusion of the whole matter. The penitent sinner is justified. That does not mean that he is righteous, as the Pharisee in his proud self-conceit trusted in himself that he was righteous. A righteous man needs no justification, and those who vainly imagine that they have no sin, shut out the grace that would justify them through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Justification is an act of God with reference to the sinner. Man does not and cannot justify himself. The very fact that he is a sinner means that he is not just, is not righteous, but the contrary. And he cannot make himself just, that is, he cannot render himself otherwise than a sinner. Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? The depravity is in our nature, and our nature cannot expel it. It cannot change itself, no more than a black man can change himself into a white man. And

even if he could, the guilt of his previous condition would be his condemnation. Refraining from making new debts does not pay those already contracted. There is no help for the sinner except in God. He alone can justify. And He does not justify by removing all sin from the sinner. This would not remove the guilt from the sinful person, whose identity remains after justification. It is still a soul that has sinned and deserves to die, even though from the hour of its justification it should sin no more. And the fact is otherwise. The Scriptures declare that in the justified person "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit" Gal. 5, 17; and St. Paul declares, "I find then a law that, when I would do good, evil is present with me." Rom. 7, 21. God justifies the sinner, not because he is no sinner, and not by rendering him sinless, but because Christ died for him and by imputing to the believer the righteousness of Christ. Justification is by faith in Christ's merits, not by any righteousness of our own. "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. 5, 1.

Dear brethren, none of us is without sin, and the soul that sinneth it shall die. Soon we shall all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and then who shall be able to stand? How can we sinners be just before God? That is the momentous question which our Gospel answers. If you come in your own righteousness, like the Pharisee, ye shall surely perish; for such righteousness is all a delusion. But if you come confessing your sin and guilt and trusting in the mercy of God and the merits of Christ, ye shall surely live; for then you have a mighty Savior. May His grace work in us all the sincere petition, God be merciful to me a sinner, that we may go down to our houses justified. Amen.

Twelfth Sunday after Trinity.

Mark 7, 31–37.

And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, He came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis. And they bring unto Him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech: and they beseech Him to put His hand upon him. And He took him aside from the multitude, and put His fingers into his ears, and He spit, and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, He sighed and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain. And He charged them that they should tell no man: but the more He charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it: and were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: He maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.

Dear Brethren:

The source of all the evil in the world is the devil, and all our help is in the name of the Lord. "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." 1 John 3, 8. With sin comes suffering and death in body and soul — suffering and death that must be endless, if some mightier power than man's do not deliver us. To effect such deliverance the Son of God came into the world. He was made flesh and dwelt among us. To Him was given all power in heaven and in earth. The bodily effects of sin as well as the spiritual were under His control, and He healed diseases and raised the dead according to His good pleasure. So we read in our text how He healed a man who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech. His almighty power was exercised in destroying the work

of the devil and restoring the deaf-mute. He worked such miracles of healing because He was Lord of all. But of infinitely more moment than such bodily evils are those which are spiritual, and He came to deliver us from them all. The same divine mercy and divine power which restored the man of whom our text speaks is exercised on earth still. Let us therefore consider to-day

CHRIST'S HEALING OF SPIRITUAL DEAF-MUTES.

Three points claim our attention in this regard. 1. *How sin renders man deaf and dumb;* 2. *How such deaf and dumb persons are healed;* 3. *What follows their healing.* May the Lord give us all grace to hear His Word and speak His praise.

I. Sin renders men deaf and dumb. It destroys all spiritual life and power, so that, though they have ears to hear, they do not hear His Word, and, though they have tongues to speak, they do not speak His praise. They are spiritually deaf and dumb.

1. Men have not lost the use of their senses by reason of sin. They can see and hear. The grandeur of the starry heavens and the beauty of the everlasting hills are not hidden from their eyes. The whispering of the winds among the trees and the piping of the birds among the branches are not as silence to their ears. They hear very well when sounds contribute to earthly pleasure or advance their temporal interests. And yet spiritually they do not hear. All nature proclaims the Deity that made it all, but who hears the proclamation? "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handy work." Ps. 19, 1. But who heeds the declaration? I do not say that man in his sin never hears voices in nature that seem to him cries from another world or calls from a mightier Being than man. St. Paul teaches

otherwise when he says: "The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead." Rom. 1, 20. Nature does reveal its Maker and Lord, so that only the fool says in his heart that there is no God. But sin has made men fools, and the voices that are clear and speak plainly enough of the Creator and His glory are unintelligible to the natural mind and do not lead to any adequate knowledge of Him. "The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thundereth." Ps. 29, 3. But who in his natural condition understands that voice and adores the great King who utters it? Mankind hears the rushing of the mighty waters and the rolling of the majestic thunder, but they do not hear God in it all. Not even the creation, reasonable as it is to infer the mighty Maker from His wonderful work, is understood in its revelation of the Godhead. For "through faith we understand that the worlds were formed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." Heb. 11, 3. Sin has so darkened the understanding that only when the grace of God works faith in the soul does His voice in nature become intelligible. And when He speaks to us by that Word which is given by inspiration of God and is contained in the Holy Scriptures, who hears the good tidings which He declares? Are people willing to read the Bible as they are willing to read the newspaper or the novel? Are they ready to hear the preaching of the Gospel as they are to hear the gossip of the day or the market reports or even the speeches on secular subjects? Alas, they are deaf to the glorious revelation of the grace of God in Christ unto the soul's salvation. And when they are induced to hear the Word with the outward ear, do they hear it with the spiritual understanding that is necessary to realize its message of grace and peace? Your

own observation will enable you to answer the question; but the Scriptures answer it most emphatically when they say: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. 2, 14. Sin has made men spiritually deaf; they have ears to hear, but they do not hear.

2. Deaf people cannot speak. They are mutes. So it is also in spiritual things. Man in his natural state can speak well enough about the things of this world. They can talk quite fluently about pleasure and business, because that requires no spiritual insight and no holy desires. Not that pleasure and business were designed to lie outside of the spiritual, and have nothing to do with it. God meant that all our enjoyments and all our employments should be holy, and His purpose is accomplished only when they are all sanctified. But they can be pursued in man's sinful condition, though the happiness at which men aim cannot be attained when God's purposes are violated. Man can live unto himself instead of living unto God as he should. And about the things which can be used in such selfish living he can speak. But as he cannot hear God and know His voice, he cannot speak to God and cannot speak about God. In that respect he is dumb as he is deaf by nature. Look around you, and see how it is. The world is full of human voices, and what is the import of all its speech? The world and the things that are in the world are talked about; the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life engage eager attention, but about the things of God and the salvation of the soul from sin and death who wants to talk? A little flock gathers around the throne of grace and holds earnest and blessed conversation with God through Christ, the Mediator between God and man; a little flock that hears the good Shepherd's voice and delights in His

gracious guidance and protection and provision for their souls' wants, confess Him and delight to lift up their voices in His praise: but it is because by divine grace they have been renewed after the image of Him that created them. The rest are without God and without hope in the world, and His name is never on their lips, unless it be to utter a profane oath or a terrible curse. They do not pray to our Father in heaven, they do not confess the Lord Jesus, His only begotten Son our Savior. How should they pray or preach when they do not know our Father and our Redeemer? "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?" Rom. 10, 13. 14. Before we can speak the praises of our Redeemer, we must hear His Word that we may know Him and adore His mercy. Before we can come before Him with petitions and supplications we must learn His name and trust His grace. But how is that possible as long as our ears are deaf to His gracious Word? "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Heb. 11, 6. As long as we are deaf to His Word we do not know Him or prize His mercy and grace, and must therefore remain dumb also, so that we cannot speak to God in prayer or talk about spiritual things to our fellow-men. Sin has made man spiritually dumb; he has a tongue, but he cannot speak to God or of God.

II. Our text shows us how such spiritual deaf-mutes are healed. Our Lord said to the deaf man, "Ephphatha, that is, be opened, and straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain." That Lord is living yet, and can cure spiritual deafness and dumbness as well as physical. But the Lord

does it; He does it in virtue of the redemption through His blood; He does it by His Word.

1. The Lord only can heal the dreadful disease which renders man deaf and dumb in spiritual things. No human power can overcome the great foe of our race, who brought sin into the world and all our woe. The devil is mighty, and only the Lord is mightier than he and can destroy his works. "If I with the finger of God cast out devils," He tells us, "no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you. When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace; but when a stronger than he shall come upon him and overcome him, he taketh from him all the armor wherein he trusted and divideth the spoils." Luke 11, 21. 22. Satan can keep the ear closed against the Word of God and the tongue tied in regard to all spiritual things, in spite of all human efforts to open and loose them. Our help is alone in the name of the Lord. He alone is stronger than this man armed. As no reasoning and no persuasive acts would have availed anything with the man in our text who was physically deaf and had an impediment in his speech, so no power of logic or eloquence can effect anything with those who are spiritually deaf. What is the use of reasoning with a man who cannot hear a word you say, or making pathetic appeals to one whose ears are closed to every sound of your voice? The ears must be opened first. Nor can any human power effect this. If it had been a mere man that spake the "Ephphatha" in our gospel, Satan would merely have laughed and the deafness would have continued as before. But it was the Lord of all, against whom Satan is powerless and to whom heaven and earth and hell are subject. Therefore the deaf man's ears were opened and he spake plain. That Lord lives, and all power in heaven and earth is His to-day, as it was in the days of His visible sojourn on earth. He can deliver from

spiritual deafness and dumbness, and He alone. For thus saith the Lord: "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." Is. 45, 22. Those who look for deliverance to any other source must be doomed to disappointment. There is no power that can overcome sin and the disastrous effects of sin but that of God. Christ heals deafness, because He is God over all, and exercises a power which is not in nature. It is the supernatural power of grace that opens deaf ears so that they can hear the Word of God and be saved. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." Eph. 2, 8.

2. But the gift is dependent upon the atonement which was made by Him whom we are to hear and whose Word by our natural power we are not able to hear. God, who alone can open our ears, would not exercise His power in our behalf if His wrath, which our sin has so richly merited, were not turned away from us. Only for Christ's sake He heals us and saves us. For thus writes the apostle: "God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved), and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Jesus Christ." Eph. 2, 4–7. God has no pleasure in the death of the sinner. He loved the world, though it had merited nothing but His wrath and displeasure, and in His great love He devised a way to save it. His righteousness condemned it, and He could not let sin go unpunished. So He sent His own dear Son into the world, "not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." John 3, 17. He sent His Son to take the sinner's place and suffer the sinner's punishment. "He hath

made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." 2 Cor. 5, 21. The sin that was ours the Son of God, having become manifest in the flesh that He might take our place, took upon Himself, so that we might go free; and the righteousness which He secured by His perfect obedience becomes ours through faith. Our condemnation was upon Him and His righteousness is upon us. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Gal. 4, 4. 5. Because He suffered the penalty of sin we have a way of escape through Him. For His sake God looks now with favor upon us. If He dealt with us as we deserve He would leave us in our deafness and blindness; but He does not deal with us as we deserve. He offers help to all because Christ redeemed us all. Therefore we are assured that God, who alone can help us, is ever ready to grant us the assistance which we need and to deliver us from the dreadful consequences of sin. He comes to all of us with His mighty "Ephphatha," be opened, because His grace is upon us in Christ for our salvation from sin and death. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Rom. 8, 32. His help is sure, for to this end Christ came.

3. And that help is given us through His Word. Our Lord simply said to the deaf man, "Ephphatha, that is, Be opened, and straightway his ears were opened and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain." That is because God spake. He does whatsoever He pleaseth, and His will is uttered in His words. So in the beginning God said, Let there be light, and there was light. He is Almighty, and what He wills and says must come to pass. "Let all the earth fear the Lord; let the

inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast." Ps. 33, 8. 9. That same Lord is with us every day, and still speaks His Word in the churches. And the very purpose of His speaking is to deliver us from the bondage of Satan and bring us to glory in His kingdom. He came to save the people from their sins, and the Gospel is His power unto salvation. He speaks that our ears may be opened and that we may sing His praise who grants us great deliverance. Where His Word is, there the Lord is, and there His mighty power is exercised. But it is not in the kingdom of grace as in the kingdom of nature. When He spoke to the deaf man, "Be opened," nothing could resist His power. The Word carried with it the force to open the ears. He spake and it was done. But grace is not thus irresistible. The Word brings with it all the powers necessary to open the spiritual ear, so that deaf sinners may hear and be saved, but no one is forced into the kingdom of God, and the sinner may stubbornly oppose the Spirit's work and refuse to hear. Thus St. Stephen says to the persecuting Jews: "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye." Acts 7, 51. That is the dreadful power of sin, that it can set the sinner's will against the Savior and hinder the accomplishment of His saving will. Were it not for this, all men would be saved; for the dear Lord died for all, and His gracious will is that all should share His great salvation. But when the Word of God comes to man with its saving power, so many reject the gracious gift and perish in their sins, notwithstanding all that Christ has done for them and all that He does for them in His Word. For it is not true that the deaf cannot help it when they cannot hear the Word and be saved. It seems so, indeed, if you look only on the surface of things. It seems rea-

sonable to argue that, if men are dead by nature and cannot hear the good tidings of salvation, and if God only can open their ears and enable them to hear, those will hear whose ears God pleases to open, and those who do not hear remain deaf and dead because God did not please to give them hearing. Sinful men would like to put the blame of their remaining deaf, while a few more highly favored ones have hearing ears, upon a deficiency in the divine mercy, which seems not to have made provision for all alike. But it is the folly of human reason that draws such conclusions. The Lord has provided for the salvation of all, and when the Word comes to deaf ears, it is with the intent that those ears should be opened and the good tidings should enter and gladden the soul. And for the accomplishment of such intent the power is in the Word which is preached. If any one does not hear, after that Word has come to him, it is not because it was impossible to hear; for the Word spoken contained God's power in it and made the hearing possible; but it was because the soul, notwithstanding the power of the Word to open the ears, obstinately resisted the Holy Ghost. Where such wilful resistance is not interposed, the Lord's gracious work will be done, and the ears will hear and the tongue will speak.

III. Such hearing and speaking is always the effect of the healing. Those who are of God hear God's Word, and when they hear this, they confess their Lord and speak His praise.

1. When the Lord opens the ears they hear His voice. That seems a matter of course. But there is need to mention it. The information is important to all of us. It furnishes us a rule for self-examination. Do we really hear God's Word? It is not meant that when our spiritual deafness is healed we can hear only spiritual things. The healing does not make us physically deaf. There

are indeed many things which then we do not want to hear. The things of the devil and the world and the flesh become distasteful, and we do not want to hear them. After we are washed we have no desire to wallow in the mire; after we hear the glorious things of God we do not want to hear the nasty noises that come from the slums. But we do not say that the children of God become deaf to everything that is going on in the world. They attend to their earthly calling and in it seek to serve their God with faithfulness. They read other things besides the Bible, and hear other things besides the preaching of the Gospel; and they read and hear these things all the more intelligently and profitably because their spiritual deafness is healed. But they hear God's Word, whatever else they may hear or not hear. And that is what I desire to impress upon you, my brethren. If you do not read the Bible, though you do read other matter; if you do not hear the preaching of the Gospel, though you do hear all sorts of things in which men of the world take interest, is it not an indication that your soul is in danger? Think of our Lord's declaration: "He that is of God heareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not because ye are not of God." John 8, 47. Should we not, in view of such a warning, go a step further, and say that, if we are eager to hear and read about the world and its doings, but hear and read the Word of God but little, and then without relish, rather as a distasteful duty than as a precious privilege, there is danger that we are wandering away from God and will soon return to the deafness from which we had been delivered? O brethren, do not treat these things lightly. Hear the Word of God: it will bring you ever increasing comfort and joy, and finally lead you to the rest that remains for the people of God.

2. But those who are cured of their deafness will also speak. That too is a matter of course; but that too

there is need of mentioning. When we once hear God's Word, we will also use our tongues and speak to God and about God. It is indeed said in our text: "He charged them that they should tell no man. But the more He charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it." But there were reasons for this charge in the circumstances of the times. It was not desirable always that crowds should press upon our Lord to receive relief from temporal ills, or that the enemies should be aroused to more bitter persecution, and both might be a result of noising His miracles abroad. He therefore in some instances told the people not to publish His miracles, though the impulse to tell what He had done was so strong that His commands were disobeyed. And now He requires us to confess Him before men, that others may hear the gracious message of salvation and come to Him for deliverance. How could we otherwise, when our ears are opened and we hear the glorious news of forgiveness of sins and everlasting life, than tell of these mercies for the blessing of man? The people that saw His marvelous works and heard of them "were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: He maketh both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak." And when He heals our spiritual deafness and dumbness and thus does mightier works among us, shall we not bless His holy name and invite others to the great Physician who heals all ills and doth all things well? O brethren, when we learn to know God, our refuge and our strength, our only hope and our mighty Savior, shall not our tongues, now loosed, speak to Him, giving Him thanks for His infinite mercy and calling upon Him for guidance and blessing even unto death? We can speak about other things, can we not speak concerning Christ and the Church? "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scrip-

ture saith, Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed." Rom. 10, 10. 11. Thank God for your power to hear and for the glorious things which you are permitted to hear, and tell to dying men the words of life which God designs that they too shall hear and speak, until "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Is. 12, 9. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Amen.

Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity.

LUKE 10, 23–37.

And He turned Him unto His disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: for I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them. And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted Him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself. And He said unto him, Thou hast answered right: This do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor? And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him: and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

Brethren beloved in Christ:

There are two things which are constantly urged upon us in Holy Scripture, and which may be said to constitute the sum and substance of their teaching. One is faith, the other love. The one is necessary that sinners may be

saved from the death which is their due; the other that the Lord who saves us may be glorified by our service. "Love is the fulfilling of the law," and therefore forms the substance of all it demands. Faith comes by the Gospel and clings to the Savior whom the Gospel proclaims. In our text we have both. Our Lord speaks of the blessedness of those who see the things which He sets before their eyes in the Gospel. But a certain lawyer did not see them, and with thoughts full of legal righteousness asked a question to tempt the Lord. That question leads Jesus to an explanation of the law, that it might be a schoolmaster leading to Himself. The question which is asked is one of importance for all time, and our Lord's instruction connected with it concerns us deeply. Let us therefore consider it:

WHAT SHALL I DO TO INHERIT ETERNAL LIFE?

We ask your attention to 1. *The Answer which the Law gives;* 2. *The Answer which the Gospel gives.*

I. The lawyer's question is not clearly conceived and therefore is not clearly worded. He has some knowledge of the Scriptures, and has heard that eternal life is inherited. That of course implies that it is not earned. There is therefore an impropriety in asking what must be *done* to inherit it. Doing in order to get a treasure does not correspond well to inheriting that treasure. But the lawyer's thoughts are fixed upon the law, and his question is framed with reference to its demands. Our Lord therefore answers him from the law.

1. What does that require? "He said unto him, What is written in the law? How readest thou?" The lawyer might be presumed to know what is written in the book of which he professed to be a teacher, and he was not ignorant of its contents. "He answering said, Thou

shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself." That is a correct answer. Our Lord approves it. "He said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live." The lawyer needs only to do what he himself finds written in the law, and he shall inherit eternal life. He thus answers his own question.

Love is the fulfilling of the law. In both its tables it requires only love: first, love God; secondly, love thy neighbor. That seems so easy. No great deeds seem to be required. If the demand were that we should remove mountains, we might say that we have not the physical strength; if it were that we should erect magnificent temples, we might say that we have not the wealth; if it were that we should teach science, we might say that we have not the learning. But seemingly every heart can love; what are hearts for if they cannot love? And men do love. But what? If it made no difference what we love, the law of love would be easily fulfilled. But it does make a difference. Look at the lawyer's answer, which our Lord pronounced right. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." God made men for Himself, and as He originally made them their affections were set upon Him. He was the object of their love, and they were happy in Him. So it was meant to be. And God's design has not been changed. So it is meant to be still, and man cannot be happy otherwise. And not only should God be the object of our love, but He should be this supremely. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind." There must be no reservation, there must be no division of affection between God and the creature. He requires the heart, not only occasional acts of love; the whole heart, not only a part

of it—not only a place there among other equal objects of love. He is a jealous God, who is satisfied with nothing less than all, who claims the whole heart with all its strength. Therefore the apostle says: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." 1 John 2, 15. 16. Men still love, but they love themselves and the things of the world which minister to their self-love. They have turned away from God. That is the misery of sin that has entered into the world.

And that has perverted the heart also in regard to the second table of the law. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." God is to be the supreme object of our love, and all other things are to be loved only in Him. His holy will must regulate everything to those who love Him. We are to do nothing and think nothing and want nothing but what pleases Him. That is love. And the same will that regulates our own lives regulates also the lives of our fellow men. There is no difference in that respect. The welfare of my neighbor is just as much the will of my heavenly Father as my own welfare, and if I love Him, my neighbor's welfare will be just as much to me as my own. That is loving my neighbor as myself. Supreme love to God must control it all, and as all is equally in subordination to that, there can be no difference made in love between myself and others. Hence the apostle says: "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." Phil. 2, 4. 5. The law, in short, requires perfect holiness, which leaves no room for selfishness.

But the lawyer, while he has nothing to say of the

first table, finds something to cavil about in the second. He was not ready to confess himself a sinner against the law, and to admit that it condemned him. "He, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor?" He had not in his heart the love which the law requires, and therefore could not understand its import. No doubt he thought that it could not mean exactly what the words express, and the word neighbor seemed capable of furnishing a loophole by which he might escape from the stern and sweeping demands. Not all men are my neighbors, and if I must love my neighbor as myself, I can at least decide for myself whom I am to consider as such. That seems to be his idea. The Lord answers his quibble by the parable in our text, showing how when there is love in the heart such a question will not arise, but that mercy will be shown where need appeals to it. A certain man fell among thieves, who robbed him and left him half dead with wounds. A priest came along, but passed by on the other side. A Levite also passed that way and looked at the sufferer, but he too went on without offering help. They were Jews, and for that reason should have rendered assistance to their countryman; they were ministers of religion, and for that reason might have been expected to afford relief to a suffering brother. But they passed along and left him in his misery.. Then a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where the wounded Jew was lying. Of him not much could be expected, for Jews and Samaritans hated each other. But he had compassion on the poor sufferer, "and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him." Nay, he not only furnished the needful assistance for the moment, but ordered the host to take care of him, left some money to defray expenses, and promised, if anything more were needed, to repay it when he came again. That

was noble, and the magnanimity of the good Samaritan commends itself to every man's mind. Our Lord asks the lawyer: "Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that showed mercy on him." That much even such a caviling legalist could see. His question was thus answered. When I have an opportunity to help, I am the neighbor that in love am to render help. "Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise." Brethren, heed the admonition!

2. What the law requires must be done. We have seen what it requires of us. Doing this now is pronounced the condition of salvation. The story of the good Samaritan was the answer to a difficulty suggested by the self-righteousness of the lawyer. The main point still remains. "This do, and thou shalt live." That is the answer to the question, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" And that, considered from the point of view presented in the Gospel, seems an exceedingly strange answer. But so it is written. Do what the law requires, and thou shalt have eternal life. That is the answer which the law gives, and the only answer which it has to give.

Nor should we think that this law is no longer in force. Our relation to it has indeed been changed since grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. But as law it remains unchanged. Nothing could be further from the truth than the notion, that now God does not demand holiness as He did when the ten commandments were given, or that in consideration of human sin and weakness, He connives at man's shortcoming and transgression. Let no man comfort himself with such a delusion. God would not be the Holy One if He relaxed His law or demanded anything less than perfect holiness. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy

neighbor as thyself." That is His holy will now as it always was and always must be, because He is unchangeably the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever. No one should think, if he is determined to seek eternal life under the law, that anything less than such perfect love, such perfect freedom from all sin, will satisfy its demand or secure the blessing. The law has nothing but condemnation for those who disobey its precepts, and it is true now, as it always was: "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them." Deut. 27, 26. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."

The lawyer answered right: "This do, and thou shalt live." There is no mistake about that. If a man keeps the law, why should he not have eternal life? Why should he not attain the immortal blessedness for which God designed him? The only obstacle in the way is sin. That brought death and damnation. But he who keeps the law has no sin. "Sin is the transgression of the law," says the apostle. 1 John 3, 4. There is no condemnation to the righteous; how could the righteous Lord condemn that which is in accord with His own righteous will? God made man righteous and pronounced His creature good. In such righteousness His beneficent design is fulfilled, and man is happy. It is only sin that makes the disturbance in the creation and brings misery and death. If you fulfill the law, that is, if you are without sin, you shall have eternal life. "This do, and thou shalt live." Those who would be saved by the works of the law are not mistaken in that respect. To the question, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life," the law gave and still gives the answer, "Do this, and thou shalt live."

3. And yet that answer, though it is right, is unsatisfactory. It is not adequate to attain the end. Let me explain.

The lawyer was thinking of the demands which God

makes upon man, and it was natural that he should expect the fulfillment of the commandments to result in life and blessedness. That is the thought which men generally entertain, and it is a reasonable thought. If you do God's will you will have God's blessing. But the doing—that is the difficulty! Our Lord desired the lawyer to realize the import of the words, "This do," and to examine himself in the light of the law, whose contents he had correctly given. Have I loved God—loved God with an undivided heart—loved Him with all my soul and strength? Have I loved my neighbor—loved him as I love myself—loved him so that I have never preferred my own interest and welfare to his? Am I perfectly holy, free from all taint of sin in heart and life? What the answer to such questions must be, if they are truthful answers, you know. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." 1 John 1, 8. One of the main objects in urging the law now is to discover our actual condition and destroy all hope of attaining life by our works. For thus saith St. Paul: "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Rom. 3, 19. 20. If the lawyer had rightly apprehended his own summary of the divine law and had received it with a humble and docile heart, he would have been led to see his sinfulness and inquire with a more profound sense of his need, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" The law might thus have become a schoolmaster to him to lead him to Christ, who is the way and the truth and the life. As it was, he failed to inherit eternal life, because he failed to "do this," which is the necessary condition of blessedness under the law.

The lesson is one of the highest concern to us, my

brethren. While there is a promise of life to those who keep the law, there is no hope for us in that direction. For we are already sinners when we enter this world of sin, and are therefore under condemnation when we draw our first breath. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me," says the psalmist. Ps. 51, 5. Ye "were dead in trespasses and sins," says St. Paul to the Ephesians, "and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." Eph. 2, 1. 3. The sin is in our nature, and its curse is therefore on us from our birth. There is no power in us to comply with our Lord's "This do," and therefore no right to claim the promise "Thou shalt live." For it is as the apostle says of men: "They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." Rom. 3, 12. So our Lord says: "Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law." John 7, 19. If men kept the law, they would live; but they do not keep it, and therefore they must die. Nor does the law furnish any remedy. It makes its demands upon us, but it does not bring any power to souls, dead in trespasses and sins, to fulfill the requirement. "Is the law then against the promises of God?" asks St. Paul; and he gives the answer, "God forbid; for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." Gal. 3, 21, 22. The law shows us what is the holy will of God and requires us to do that will; but it has not the power to call to life the spiritually dead, so that they can fulfill it. Righteousness would be by the law, if the law could give life to those who are dead in transgression; as it is, it can only condemn the transgressor because he fails to comply with its terms. There-

fore we sum up the whole in the words of St. Paul: "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." Gal. 2, 16.

Are all men then hopelessly lost? Is there no possibility of inheriting eternal life? Is there no way to be saved from the curse which is upon men because of transgression? Thank God, there is such a way, and we find it in

II. The answer of the Gospel. "He turned Him unto His disciples and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see; for I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them, and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." The people of God in the old dispensation were told of a coming Messiah, who should redeem His people and save them from theirs sins, and the faithful anxiously waited for the consolation of Israel. And now the Savior had come and stood among them. The blessed Gospel of the grace of God unto salvation through faith in Christ was now proclaimed, and they were blessed who saw and heard those things. The burden of it all was, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

1. The way of salvation is by faith in Christ, not by the deeds of the law. "Now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference: for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness, that He might be

just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Rom. 3, 21–26. The law requires works, and that not only external actions conformed to its prescriptions, but holy hearts with holy thoughts and affections. These works no man renders, and no man is able to render them, nor has the law itself any power to furnish the ability. All have sinned and are doomed to death. But God had mercy on us and sent His Son to deliver us. Him we embrace by faith. There is no way in which the good tidings of redemption could be embraced except by believing them. And the same merciful God who sent His Son to die for our sins works faith in us to believe the precious message of salvation. Nothing more than such faith is required to share the full blessing of Christ's work. "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law." Rom. 3, 28. If any man wants to be justified by keeping the law, he must fulfill it in all its particulars. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." James 2, 10. No man can be justified in that way of works. It is the way of despair; for the "This do" will ever stand as a menace against him. But if we would be saved through Christ, we must rid ourselves of all thoughts of meriting salvation by the deeds of the law. His work is perfect, and the faith that clings to Him embraces a perfect righteousness, which has no need of our works. We are justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

2. Such justifying faith clings to the righteousness of the Savior, and has thus a righteousness that avails before God. It is not, as some imagine, that faith is itself a holy work which God accepts in lieu of all others which the law commands, and that any faith, faith in any object, would secure salvation. "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see" — which see the Savior of the world. There is no merit in faith, as there is no merit in

any power or act of the creature. And our faith, like everything else that is in man, is imperfect and could not satisfy the requirements of God. It could not save us as an act of obedience or as a disposition of the soul. If a man believes a falsehood, his faith endangers his soul instead of saving it. He may be sincere, but that avails him nothing so long as he has not Christ. The saving power is in the object, not in the faith. Christ is the Savior, and faith saves because it takes hold of a real righteousness which satisfies all the demands of God's holy law. He fulfilled all righteousness. And He fulfilled it in our stead. What the law demands of us, He performed for us, so that when we believe in Him we stand before God as if we had done it all. What the law threatens to visit upon us as the punishment of our transgression, He suffered for us, so that when we believe we stand before God as if we had endured the penalty which the law pronounces against transgressors. He "made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man, and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." That obedience is the righteousness of which the Scriptures speak as the ground of our salvation. It is the merit of Christ which is imputed to us when we believe in our blessed Savior. Therefore it is called the righteousness of God by faith. "He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." 2 Cor. 5, 21. He that believeth shall be saved, not because his faith has merit, but because it embraces and appropriates the perfect righteousness of Jesus, "who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." Rom. 4, 25.

3. The answer of the Gospel to the question, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" is thus entirely adequate

and satisfactory, while it does not make void the law or abate one jot or tittle of its demands. "This do" remains its inexorable requirement. But because man could not fulfill that requirement and thus obtain the promise of life, the Son of God came in the flesh to fulfill it for us and secure our salvation through His righteousness. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." Rom. 8, 3. 4. These words of the apostle show us the wisdom and mercy of God in our salvation, notwithstanding all our inability to do what is required of us and notwithstanding all the guilt of our transgression. The law is good and righteous. The fault does not lie in that when we fail to inherit eternal life under its reign. The fault lies in us, who are flesh, that is, who are sinful and incapable of doing what it requires. "It was weak through the flesh." It demands righteousness, and all its demands are made upon us in vain, because we are unrighteous. To remedy this God gave His own dear Son, who assumed our nature, yet without its sin, and performed everything that the law required, and suffered all the punishment which we had merited. Sin was thus condemned in the flesh, and through the Savior's merits we are free from the penalty of sin and inherit eternal life. The law is thus not set aside, but fulfilled; and when we believe, we have the whole perfect righteousness which it requires, because we have the righteousness of our Savior, who did all and suffered all that it demands of men. And then only, when by the grace of God we are made believers and are justified by faith, have we that new life from the fulness of Christ which renders or can render obedience to the will of God. Then we walk not after the flesh, but after the

Spirit; and although our life is still imperfect, so that we could never be justified by our obedience and holiness, we still delight in the law of the Lord and strive in all things to please Him who has saved us by grace through faith.

Dear brethren, we have thus in our Gospel presented to us lessons of unspeakable moment to our souls. We want to be saved from the wrath to come; we want to inherit eternal life. O, let us not permit Satan to destroy our hopes by lodging in our minds the fatal error that we can be saved by the deeds of the law. That would be a practicable way only if we had no sin; that is, if we did not need salvation. But we do need it, and the law with its demands and its penalties shows us how much we need it. And now the Lord Jesus is preached to us as the Savior we need. Let us not neglect the great salvation or treat it lightly. Blessed are your eyes and ears if ye see and hear Him. Cling to Him by faith, and ye shall inherit eternal life. Amen.

Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity.

LUKE 17, 11–19.

And it came to pass, as He went to Jerusalem, that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. And as He entered into a certain village, there met Him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: and they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when He saw them, He said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And He said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

Dear Brethren:

It is difficult to realize that our blessed Lord, now exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high, once walked among men down here on this earth, where we live and move. But it is so. He labored and suffered here for our salvation, and during all the weary years preceding His ignominious death upon the cross to pay the penalty of our sin, He went about doing good and preaching deliverance from death. The sick and the suffering came to Him, or were brought to Him, from all the region round about, and He had mercy on them and healed them. So we read in our text that ten men who were afflicted with the most loathsome of diseases, met Him as He was passing, and they cried for help and were cleansed. Does not the thought sometimes present itself to you, if we only had such a Helper among us now? Lo, He is with us still—the same mighty, merciful Helper is with us

still! Let us endeavor to realize and utilize this blessed truth to-day while we consider the history of

THE LEPERS CLEANSED.

Our text shows us 1. *How they prayed in their uncleanness;* 2. *How they were cleansed by our Lord;* and 3. *What followed their cleansing.* Be Thou with us, O Thou Help of the helpless, and bless us while we speak and hear!

I. The lepers prayed to Jesus for deliverance from their dreadful affliction. "It came to pass, as He went to Jerusalem, that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. And as He entered into a certain village there met Him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off; and they lifted up their voices and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." They felt their misery; they recognized Jesus as the Master; they cried for mercy. Let us learn of them how to find help.

1. Leprosy is an incurable disease of the skin and blood that was dreaded as a living death. Those afflicted with it were forbidden to associate with mankind, because the disease is contagious. They were outcasts from society. Therefore when Jesus passed they stood afar off. If any one came near, they were required to give warning by crying, Unclean, unclean. Of course those who were afflicted with it could go together, and misery loves company. There were here ten of them, finding in each other's society such soothing for their wretchedness as the circumstances admitted. One of these was a Samaritan. He would probably not have been found in fellowship with Jews if a common misery had not brought them together. All of them were conscious of their affliction. They felt it, and made no effort to conceal it. And that

was a blessing. It does not seem so, indeed, at a mere hasty glance. It would seem an advantage rather to close the eyes against the terrible fact that brings pain and suffering. That is the philosophy, too, which some men teach. They tell us to divert the mind from the calamity which is upon us, that we may realize it as little as possible. But it is the foolish philosophy which the ostrich practices when it hides its head in the bush and shuts the coming calamity from sight, or the distressed exemplifies when he drowns his sorrows in the intoxicating cup. The first condition of a cure is a knowledge of the disease. Men will not ask for help, they will not even accept help, as long as they do not recognize any need of it. The lepers were aware of their wretched condition, and that in the circumstances rendered their case hopeful. It furnished the motive to seek help. And so it is with the terrible disease of sin, of which leprosy is an image. As long as men do not know their leprous condition and do not realize its misery, they will not ask for help, and will spurn it when it is offered. The lepers felt their misery and knew their need. But they did not brood over it in lazy lassitude and give way to despair when help was near.

2. They recognized Jesus as the Master who could bring deliverance. How far their knowledge reached of Jesus as the Savior of the world we have no means of knowing. Certainly they had not the opportunities which we possess of becoming acquainted with the blessed gifts and promises of the Gospel. It is probable too from the subsequent history that they did not all employ with the purest motives the knowledge which they had. But they had heard of Jesus, for they spake His name; and they knew of His power, for they called Him Master. Very likely it was not all clear in their minds, but they owned Him as Lord and came to Him for help. And He was their Master, and Master over all creatures, so that storm

and waves as well as diseases and devils were subject unto Him. Although the leprosy was regarded as beyond the reach of any human power to heal, they were not without hope that this Master could subdue it. So much confidence they had in Him through the report which they had heard of Him. And that was another step in the direction of deliverance. So when the leprosy of sin is recognized in the soul, it is not meant that such soul should sink into despair, but that it should hearken to the report of a mighty Deliverer and call upon Him as the mighty Master, who came to heal all disease and deliver from death.

3. The lepers cried for mercy. They did not claim help as their due for any good that was in them or for any services that they had rendered. They knew their misery and had heard that Jesus was a Master who could help them. And they had heard more. It had come to their ears that He was not only mighty, but merciful as He was mighty. And in some sense they believed it. Probably they had not that faith which clings to Jesus as the Helper in all ailments. It would seem, at least, that they did not see the more dreadful leprosy of their souls and did not seek its cure at His hands. But they knew the mercy of the Master, and they so far believed it, at any rate, that they appealed to that mercy for help. Their distress impelled them to cry for aid, without making any claim of deserving it, but with an appeal simply to the Master's mercy. No doubt it is often the case now also that calamities and afflictions drive men to prayer without a sincere faith in the power and willingness of the Lord to heal the spiritual ailment which underlies all temporal distress. They desire to be relieved of this earthly suffering, without feeling much concern for the sin of the soul which brings everlasting misery. That is unquestionably the reason why so many forget their Helper when they have enjoyed His help. But these lepers cried to the Master

for mercy, and whatever may have been lacking in their souls, that was right. And in that respect too their conduct shows what is to be done in the leprosy of the soul. The Master can heal that also, and the appeal must be to His mercy. For the uncleanness of the soul excludes all hope of help on the ground of merit. The uncleanness is demerit. It is damnable. And to ask for help from that on account of which we are condemned, on the ground that we have deserved blessing, not cursing, is an impeachment of the divine justice and only increases our damnation. The cry must be for mercy. God's mercy, not our merit is our hope. It is our only hope. And those who trust in that mercy are never put to shame. The lepers called upon the Lord in the time of their trouble, relying upon His mercy, and they were helped. Come to Jesus with all your uncleanness and He will cleanse you; as it is written: "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all iniquity." 1 John 1, 8. 9. The great Master is among us still, and His mercy cleanses souls of the leprosy of sin.

II. The prayer of the lepers was heard, and they were cleansed. "When He saw them, He said unto them, Go and show yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass that as they went they were cleansed." They obeyed the Lord's command; they manifested their trust in the Master by their obedience; they were cleansed without any ceremony as they went the way of obedience and confidence.

1. The mercy of the Lord is not appealed to in vain. He is a God that heareth prayer. But He requires obedience. His ways are not our ways, and His ways must be pursued to accomplish His merciful ends. He commands

the lepers, "Go show yourselves unto the priests." There was no doubt something disappointing in this. They desired to be healed. That was the import of their cry for mercy. Why should they show themselves to the priests? They were leprous without a doubt, and what could the priests do but pronounce them leprous? They could not cleanse the leper. They could only apply the prescribed tests and declare whether persons were afflicted with leprosy or not. They could pronounce clean or unclean according to the facts. That was all. Why then should they go to the priests? The command would not commend itself to man's natural reason. But the Master so commanded, and obedience was necessary to obtain the blessing. The Lord prescribes ways to man, He does not permit man to prescribe ways to Him. He knows by what means to attain the blessed end, men do not. Obedience is therefore necessary. And it is necessary because He is the Master, and man never can stand in the right relation to Him until He is recognized as the Master. They must learn to say: "Speak, Lord; for Thy servant heareth." How sadly therefore do they not err, who raise objections to the Master's words declaring the way of salvation! He says, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins," Acts 22, 16; and men say, How can baptism wash sins away? He says, "Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins," Matt. 26, 26. 27; and men say, How can He give us His blood to drink or His body to eat, and how could such eating and drinking have anything to do with the remission of sins? He says, "Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them," John 20, 23; and men say, How can men, who are sinners themselves, remit the sins of other men? Reason rebels against the Lord that gave it, and men profess to be wiser than their Maker. O brethren, this is wholly an evil among us, and can only

bring disaster. Hear the Master, who loved you unto death and loves you now; hear Him, and do what He tells you. That is the way of peace and happiness. That will lead to the blessed ends of His mercy, who has thoughts of peace and salvation towards us. The lepers cleansed are not in every respect models to be imitated; but they did as the Lord commanded and were cleansed. Go thou and do likewise.

2. The obedience of these ten men implies that they had some confidence in the Master whose help they implored. Not everything was in their hearts as it should have been. Their bodily ailment was evidently uppermost in their thoughts, and their distress arising from that source was evidently the main motive of their cry to the Master for mercy. But though they had no faith to embrace Him as the Savior from the leprosy of sin, which is a thousandfold worse than the bodily affliction which they so keenly felt, they had some confidence in His power and mercy to afford the relief which they were sensible of needing and which they earnestly desired. They would not have obeyed the command which He gave them, and for which their reason could supply no sufficient ground, if they had not had some confidence in the Master who gave it. Reason or no reason, the Master whose mercy they had implored had spoken, and they obeyed. According to the light we have, according to the need we feel, let us trust in Him. He will give us more light and lead us in ways of larger deliverance, as He did the one thankful soul that returned and gave Him the glory. Only trust the Master as He leads you on step by step, and it will be well with you, though you do not always see the path. "Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness." Ps. 112, 4. Trust in the Lord and do what He tells you, whether you see it all clearly or not, and you shall experience what is written: "The path of the just is

as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Prov. 4, 18. The lepers did as they were commanded, at least so far trusting the Master's guidance, and their petition was granted.

3. "It came to pass that, as they went, they were cleansed." There was no ceremony used, no application made, as was the case in some of our Lord's miracles. He simply told them what they were to do. That this was meant to imply that their petition should be granted and thus included the healing word, is evident from the effect. That they understood the command to imply such answer to their prayer for mercy and thus to include the order for their cleansing, is evident from their obedience. Neither their appearance before the priests nor any power in possession of the priests could effect the cure. It was the power of the Master, and His command included the expression of His will, to which all things are subject. The word of the Master did its work as they went, and the lepers were cleansed. So it is always. When our Lord made clay of spittle and anointed the eyes of the blind man whose sight He restored, or when He put His fingers into the ears of the deaf man whom He made to hear, the power was not in the ointment or in the ceremony, but in Him. He speaks the word and it is done, because in His word He puts forth the power of His will. No material means is adequate to the results achieved by His omnipotence. Whether these means have in their own nature powers great or small, or no power at all, is a matter of no consequence when He employs them for the accomplishment of His purpose. Therefore it is no matter whether He uses any earthly element or any ceremony at all or not. He does the work, and when His word expressing His will is spoken, His power is exerted and His will is done. What is of importance for us is to do what He tells us, and not reject His will because, if He chose, its

end might be obtained in some other way than that prescribed. No doubt Naaman could have been cleansed some other way than by washing in the Jordan; but the Lord chose this way, and therefore for Naaman there was no other. No doubt the Lord could cleanse men's souls of the dreadful leprosy of sin in some other way than by employing the Word and Sacraments to which He has referred us. Certainly no earthly elements, such as are used in Baptism and the Holy Supper, could in virtue of their own nature produce the great results for which they were chosen. The Lord produces them, but He produces them in His own way, and that is the way we must take to secure the blessing. Do what He tells you, and trust His wisdom and mercy; then it will be well with you. As the lepers went, in compliance with His command to go, they were cleansed.

III. One point more in our text demands our attention. It is that which followed the cleansing of the lepers. "One of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks; and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And He said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole." That is a painful record, that nine of these favored unfortunates went on their way without a word of thanks to their gracious Benefactor. But it is also a consoling record, showing that at least one was grateful, and that this one who appreciated the mercy shown was the recipient of larger benefits and was cleansed of a deeper leprosy than that which afflicted the body.

1. Of the ten who were cleansed the very one of whom we would expect least, returns and gives glory to God. It was the Samaritan. We would expect least of

him, because he had least opportunity of knowing the Master as the Savior of the world and the everlasting King in Zion, and because he belonged to a people whom the children of Israel excluded from all claim to the blessing of Jehovah, and whom they treated with scorn. But we always err when we presume to judge spiritual effects from natural causes. We may assign reasons why the nine Jews rather than the one Samaritan should have glorified the Helper who came to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but the fact was against these reasons. The mercy of the Lord wrought in the heart of the Samaritan as it did not in the heart of the nine Jews, though all experienced the same healing of their bodily disease. This one did what all right thinking and all right feeling must commend. Under the influence of the Lord's mercy he acted nobly. His heart was thankful for the benefit received, and that thankfulness was not obstructed in its pressure for utterance. He turned back to the Master and gave vent to the emotions of his heart. With a loud voice he glorified God. He had joined the cry for mercy, and he recognized the work of mercy in his cleansing. And that mercy he saw to be divine. He gave God the glory. Nor was the Master excluded from that honor, as if He had been merely a human agent through whom God performed the merciful work. He fell down at the Savior's feet and gave Him thanks. That must come if the work of divine mercy is permitted to accomplish its end. The Lord worketh mightily among us, but the work is obstructed if it does not move the heart to gratitude. Even the temporal gifts are not rightly appreciated if they do not lead to thanksgiving. Least of all is that spiritual cleansing, which the blood of Jesus effects, productive of its full and final results, if its power to bring us to Jesus' feet in grateful praise is hindered. Ye have received un-

told bounties and blessings from on high. Are ye thankful too?

2. Of the ten healed nine were not: "there are not found that returned and gave glory to God save this stranger." Is that not a marvelous thing? Ten received deliverance from a deadly disease that rendered them outcasts in their misery, and were restored to health and society and happiness, and one only appreciates the mercy and gives thanks! Where are the nine? We do not know. They did not come to thank the Master; that we know. And we wonder at their baseness. But is it not the story of human ingratitude that is illustrated among us every day? How many of those who daily eat our Father's bread ever think of thanking Him for the gift? How many of those who are delivered from sickness and death by our Father's care ever think of praising Him for His mercy? Nay, how many even of those who have been cleansed of the leprosy of sin are willing to consecrate their gifts to God and live thankful lives? Is it not sad that of the many who are baptized and profess to own the Savior there are so few who can be depended upon, when such sacrifices as would show their gratitude are to be made? Do we not even hear murmuring and complaining when work or money is required for the Lord's kingdom? So many call themselves Christians, and often when the Lord needs their gifts and services there are not found to give glory to God save this stranger! Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? How is it with you, O ye that hear this divine complaint to-day, how is it with you? Take the question home with you, and ponder it well. It will be a blessing to you. The further blessing will depend on the right use of the blessing received. To him that hath shall be given.

3. The one thankful soul was richly blessed above the others. Not that the dear Savior was more merciful

to him than to others. Surely He wanted them all to appreciate His love and receive the full measure of His help. Surely He desired that they all should turn back and glorify God. But only one of the ten did this, and therefore to only one of the ten did He say, "Go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole." In a certain sense they all had faith. They had faith to be healed, for they trusted the Master sufficiently to obey His command and go as they were bidden. But they did not all go farther and find in this mighty Helper a Savior also from their sin and from the death which is its consequence. The one was thankful, and did not stop at mere temporal blessings in his trust. He trusted the Master entirely, and was raised by the grace of God to that higher vision which sees in Jesus not only a Master over material powers, but a mighty Savior from spiritual ailments. The faith of the stranger who returned and gave thanks was a different thing from that which sought relief from bodily disease and was willing to try any means that could possibly afford relief. It was of a higher order; else why should the Master say of him, and only of him, "Thy faith hath made thee whole?" He was made whole spiritually. His leprosy of sin was cleansed. He therefore took his place among the children of God, while the nine—where are they? O brethren, make good use of the gifts which ye have, and ye shall receive more abundantly.

We have reached the close. The lesson of the lepers is very simple, but it is full of instruction and full of warning. Shall we have heard it in vain? Think about it and talk about it when you return to your homes; and the grace of our Lord Jesus be with you to make you thankful and bless you. Amen.

Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity.

MATT. 6, 24–34.

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto His stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (for after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

My dear Brethren:

Do not give way to the thoughts of the flesh which rise in opposition to this teaching of our Lord. Examine it first. Ponder it first. Pray over it first. It will not seem so impracticable then. Its wisdom will become apparent. Must we, then, it is asked, be reckless and improvident in order to be true disciples of Jesus? Not at all, we answer. Christians should be wise and walk circumspectly, "not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Then, it is further asked, must we

look upon the whole lesson as an extravagant and overstrained representation of a principle that must be sought by toning down and modifying the words in accordance with more sober thinking and more practical views of life? Not that, either: O brethren, not that. That is the way to deprive ourselves of all the light and wisdom of Holy Scripture by reducing it to the level of our own folly and blindness. Come, let us candidly consider what our Lord teaches concerning

MAN'S ONLY PROPER CARE.

Let us endeavor to understand from the text 1. *What our care should be*, and 2. *Why this should be our only care.* May the Holy Spirit lead us to see and appreciate the truth!

I. What is that for which we should take thought and which constitutes man's proper care? The answer is given in the words: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." That is the essential thing. Whatever else may be supposed necessary, this is indispensable. If this be neglected, all is vanity and all is lost. Therefore seek this first.

1. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." What does that mean? You observe that it speaks of a kingdom in which we have an interest, but the benefits of which we might fail to obtain. We must seek it, and seek it first.

God, who made the heavens and the earth, is King over all. He is the mighty Monarch of the universe. The Lord God omnipotent reigneth, and all things are subject to His dominion. How could it be otherwise, when He made them all and upholds them all by the word of His power? "Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises unto our King, sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth; sing ye praises with understanding. God

reigneth over the heathen; God sitteth upon the throne of His holiness." Ps. 47, 6–8. His kingdom is universal and everlasting.

But that does not explain it all. If He reigns over all and all things are subject to Him, are we not in the kingdom of God as soon as we exist? How could any creature be otherwise than under the government of God? And if God rules over us, does that not mean that we are in His kingdom? In one sense, yes. Let no one imagine that he can escape the pains and penalties of violating the great King's law by refusing to submit to His authority. He is King, whether you own Him or not, and He rules, and rules over you too, even though you should join the heathen who rage against Him and imagine a vain thing. The eyes of the King are on you, and His punishments will overtake you if you rebel against His righteous reign. It is imagining an utterly vain thing to dream of ridding one's self of all accountability to Him by refusing to recognize Him as our King. He remains King for ever, whether men will hear and obey, or whether they forbear to hear His voice and bow to His scepter. All men are responsible to Him, and all will be called to account. And in regard to all, whether they submit or rebel, He does as seemeth to Him good. The will of His omnipotence cannot be thwarted. In that sense all are in His kingdom. That is the kingdom of nature—the kingdom in which all creatures are by nature, as subject to their Master's will. So far there would seem to be no need for seeking the kingdom of God.

But that is not all that the Bible says about the great King and His kingdom. Unhappily there are creatures that have set their own will in opposition to that of the Lord of all, and a kingdom of darkness and death has been set up by the leader of the rebellion, into which the human race has been drawn. Therefore "the whole world lieth

in wickedness." 1 John 5, 19. Therefore our Lord tells the Jews who would not hear Him, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him." John 8, 44. Therefore this father of lies is called "the prince of this world." John 14, 30. Therefore the apostle says of men before their regeneration, "Ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath even as others." Eph. 2, 2. 3. The most dreadful of all catastrophes occurred when the leader of the rebellion against God succeeded in bringing mankind into subjection to him. Death came, and all nature gave signs of woe. Human happiness was gone, and even hope was lost. Men put themselves under the devil, as their prince and lord, and renounced allegiance to the King over all. God did not cease to reign on this account. The devil too is subject to His power. But the hearts of His subjects were stolen away from Him, and He could exercise His righteous reign only by dooming them to destruction. They were miserable, and there was nothing in prospect for them but eternal misery.

In view of this the great King resolved to establish a kingdom of grace. The devil had set up a kingdom in opposition to the Creator's kingdom, and had won mankind. The Creator resolved to set up a kingdom in opposition to the devil, and preserve what could without violence be preserved from the impending doom. He sent His Son into the world, "not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." John 3, 17. He laid upon Him the iniquities of us all, that through His

stripes we might be healed. The Lamb of God came and bore the sins of the world. And now He calls to all the ends of the earth that they may come to Him and be saved. He calls us by the Gospel to salvation from the woe and death to which we are doomed in the devil's kingdom. He uses no violence; He does not force us to come to Him and be saved; but He calls us, and in the word of the Gospel He gives the power to come. He draws us by His love to come and be blessed. By His grace He wins the hearts of men. Many will not come; many prefer to remain the slaves of the prince of this world and continue their hostility to the great King; many choose death rather than life—poor souls, choose slavery and misery rather than freedom and happiness. But some hear and believe and are saved. They come to Jesus and live under His gentle reign of grace and are blest. They own Him as their King; they are His subjects in His kingdom of grace; they form His kingdom. Hence it is said, "Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee." Matt. 21, 5. Hence it is said that Jesus came "preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the Gospel." Mark 1, 14. 15. Hence our Savior taught us to pray, "Thy kingdom come."

This is the kingdom that we are to seek, and to seek first. To be found in this kingdom, that is to be our great care and concern. That should occupy our minds first and foremost. That should absorb all our thoughts. For what would be the use of all else if we remained in the devil's kingdom and had nothing in prospect but death and damnation? What would it profit a man if he gained the whole world and lost his own soul? O my hearers, beware, and escape while you may from the clutches of the devil, who would drag you to eternal torment, and come to Jesus, who

gives pardon and peace and everlasting joy. Do not be fools: seek first the kingdom of God, which "is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." Rom. 14, 15.

2. In this kingdom you will find the righteousness of God. Seek that. There through the Gospel is offered to us the righteousness which our Savior acquired for us and which is made ours by faith, and there the Holy Spirit purifies our hearts by faith, that we may bring forth fruits of righteousness in our lives. Seek that righteousness—seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

We are children of wrath by nature. We are under condemnation because of our sin and rebellion. In this unholy and unrighteous condition we cannot enter the mansions of the blest in heaven; we could not be happy in this condition anywhere. We must be righteous to please God and dwell with Him. But we have no righteousness, and can acquire none. We cannot acquire it on earth, and could not acquire it in hell: to heaven we could not be admitted without it. Our only hope and help is in the mercy of God. He provided what was needed. He gave His own dear Son, who assumed our nature and took our place, and who fulfilled all righteousness in our stead. He did this by performing all the great King required us to do as His creatures and subjects, and by bearing all the punishment which His justice demanded for our violation of His will and law. God "made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." 2 Cor. 5, 21. That is the righteousness which is offered to us in His kingdom by the Gospel and which is made ours by faith. Thus St. Paul says: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is

written, The just shall live by faith." Rom. 1, 16. 17. That righteousness renders us accepted as subjects in the kingdom of grace. That is the only deliverance from the death and damnation that is upon us as subjects of the prince of this world. That seek. Take thought for that. Flee from the wrath to come. Lay hold on eternal life. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." There is salvation in no other name. O house of Israel, why will ye die? Flee for refuge to the hope set before you. Let that be your care.

And that will bring about the righteousness of life which belongs to the kingdom of God. The Holy Spirit changes our hearts and turns us to our rightful King when He brings us to Jesus and renders us believers in Him. He purifies our hearts by faith. He enables us to renounce the devil and all His works, and to abound in good works to the glory of God. "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Tit. 2, 11–14. Seek to realize more fully the design of your calling. Seek to have more of the mind of Christ. Seek more thoroughly to execute the will of your King in all manner of service to your fellow men. Seek more amply to show forth His praises. "We beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification." 1 Thess. 4, 1–3. This is your calling; let this be your care. "For this

cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, who hath delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son." Col. 1, 9–13.

These are the things that solicit our care. These are the things that are worthy of our thought. They are needful to attain the end of our creation and redemption. They belong to our peace and eternal salvation. Seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

II. And that should be your only care. That is the second topic to be explained. I hope the way is now prepared for its right apprehension. Our Lord exhorts the multitude not to harbor anxious cares about the necessaries of this earthly pilgrimage. That is not to be their concern. They are not to worry about that. "I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body what ye shall put on." The word which our Savior uses does not imply thoughtlessness or recklessness in the use of food and drink and clothing. He does not say that we should be indifferent whether our food be wholesome or hurtful, or whether our clothing be sufficient or insufficient, clean or filthy. Neither does He say that our minds should never entertain the question whether we should work or be idle, whether we should rightly use the gifts of His bounty or squander them. To live under Him in His kingdom and do His will must be our care. But that is all. He pro-

vides the things of this life, and we are to trust His care. Any anxious thoughts about to-morrow's bread is inconsistent with such trust. It implies that, after all, our God may forsake us and fail to provide for us. Therefore the apostle says: "Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Phil. 4, 5. 6. The reasons which our Lord gives for His warning against such anxious thought will more fully illustrate the meaning. Let us briefly consider them.

1. We begin with that which introduces the subject. "No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on." The matter is plain. If you live under the Lord in His kingdom, you cannot serve some other master and put your trust in some other power; if you live under the devil in his kingdom, you cannot serve God and put your trust in Him. It is either one or the other; it cannot be both. When men look to mammon for help, and think themselves well provided for only when they have money and goods, and therefore take thought for these things, is it not because they refuse to serve the living God and trust His care? Is He a Lord that does not amply provide for His subjects—a Father that does not know and supply the wants of his children? What does it mean when people, actuated by the thought that there is safety and happiness only in earthly possessions, lend their whole mind to making money? Does it not mean that they are in the service of a master who requires such care and solicitude? And is it not manifest that this

master is another than the Lord who calls us into His kingdom of grace and bids us trust in Him? Hence the Bible warns us against covetousness as idolatry. It is serving another master than the Lord our God. That is the reason why our Savior says that "the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful." Mark 4, 19. And that is the reason why St. Paul says: "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil, which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things, and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness." 1 Tim. 6, 9–11. The frequent warnings against greed for gain and love of money are not without cause. These are idolatrous and destroy the soul. They are the service of mammon, which excludes the service of God. Therefore flee these choking cares and serve the Lord who careth for you.

2. Such cares are unreasonable and unworthy of intelligent creatures. "Is not the life more than meat and the body than raiment?" If God gives us life, will He not also give what is necessary to sustain it? If He forms the body, will He not supply what is needful to protect it? If He cares enough for us to endow us with powers and capacities which have wants to attain the end of their creation, will He not care enough to supply these wants and secure His purposes? How stupidly men think when they imagine that they must assume these cares — when they give way to the enemy of God and suppose that He neglects the work of His hands! "Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much

better than they?" If He cares for His creatures that are less highly endowed and are made for less exalted purposes, will he not much rather care for you? And if under His care their every want is amply supplied and they are comfortable and happy according to their capacity, though they have no power to do the work through which God makes provisions for men, will not much more under His paternal care every want of ours be supplied? Is it then reasonable that we should have anxious thoughts about that which is not our business—that we should assume cares on the foolish supposition that God does not care? Nay, more. "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature?" Suppose you do undertake to do the Lord's work and assume the care which belongs to Him: what do you accomplish by it? You are powerless. You have what He gives you, and that is all. With all your care you cannot have a crust or a penny more than His care gives or puts within your reach. Therefore the cares of the world are foolish as well as idolatrous.

3. It follows of necessity from this that they are the outgrowth of unbelief, and utterly inconsistent with Christian faith. "Why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" The Lord has called us to live under Him and serve Him in His kingdom: will He not provide for His servants? Your Father has adopted you in His own dear Son to be His children: will He not give His children bread? He has promised to care for you and supply your every want: will He not keep His word? What kind of a master is that that lets

his servants starve? What kind of a father is that that lets his children cry for bread unheard? What kind of a god is that that leaves his worshipers in naked, famishing, shelterless, helpless misery? O brethren, what an impeachment of our merciful Father and Savior to presume that His care is not sufficient, and that if we do not care for ourselves we shall come to want and perish by the way! What a shame for men to call themselves Christians and yet show such distrust of a Father's care! O ye of little faith, "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Rom. 8, 32. "Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." Have faith in Him; trust His fatherly care. Abandon the heathenish, unbelieving thought that your support depends on your providence. The Gentiles know no better. They do not know our Father. They are without God and without hope in the world. No wonder that they trouble themselves with anxious cares about the necessaries of life. But you have a kind Father who provides. Commit your cares to Him, He knows your wants. Have faith in Him. If you trust Him, how can you worry about to-morrow's bread as if He could not or would not provide? Believe that He is your Father and trust His promises, and such anxious thoughts must vanish.

4. One reason more must be urged in conclusion. It is that which stands in connection with the care required of men and which serves to explain all. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." That means that if we exercise the care which properly belongs to us, we have thus included everything that can concern our welfare

in time and eternity. The Lord does not tell us that we need not care whether we do our work or not, or whether we have anything to eat and drink and wear or not. "Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work." Idleness is a sin. "When we were with you," says the apostle, "this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread." 2 Thess. 3, 10–12. Christianity renders men diligent in the business of their calling, not reckless idlers who care nothing whether they are of any use in this world or not. "It is required of a steward that a man be found faithful." The Lord whom we serve gives us labor to perform in His kingdom, and holds us to a strict account for the use of the talents committed to our trust. Do the work which He commands to be done in His Church. Do the work which He has assigned you in your temporal calling. See that you serve God and serve one another faithfully. Do you not see that that belongs to the righteousness which we are to seek in His kingdom? That belongs to our proper care. And then food and raiment are provided for, because the Lord sees to that. There is no cause to be anxious about these things, for we are working for a Master who has engaged to give us all we need; and He is faithful. "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shalt not want."

O my brethren, have not many of you been trying to serve both God and mammon, professing to be Christ's and yet taking thought for your life, what ye shall eat, and for your body, what ye shall put on? Repent of this great sin. Choose you this day whom ye will serve. Blessed Jesus, give all of us grace to choose Thee, only Thee! Amen.

Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity.

LUKE 7, 11–17.

And it came to pass the day after, that He went into a city called Nain; and many of His disciples went with Him, and much people. Now when He came nigh unto the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And He came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And He said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And He delivered him to his mother. And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited His people. And this rumor of Him went forth throughout all Judea, and throughout all the regions round about.

Dear Brethren:

Our Lord had healed the servant of the centurion, who had manifested such a mighty faith that it put to shame the children of Israel. Next day He went to the city of Nain, accompanied by many people, who were drawn to Him by His teaching and by His miracles. Probably He was on His way to Jerusalem. It was in the happy time of Spring, when life was exuberant and budded and blossomed all around them as they went. "The flowers appeared on the earth; the time of the singing of birds had come, and the noise of the turtle was heard in the land." The air was full of fragrance and full of song, and all creation was full of life and full of joy. But it was not a jubilant procession that they met at the city gate of Nain. It was a funeral. They were carrying out to the place of burial the dead body of a youth, and there was

sore lamentation for an only son. That is the scene which the narrative of our text presents—a narrative that is perfect in its sad simplicity and chastened beauty. Let us tenderly follow it and see how

JESUS WAKES THE DEAD.

We will contemplate 1. *The Compassion that moves Him;* 2. *The Power that goes out from Him;* and 3. *The Glory that is given Him.* May the contemplation give us comfort in view of suffering and death!

I. "It came to pass the day after that He went into a city called Nain, and many of His disciples went with Him, and much people. Now when He came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not." There was death and sorrowing, and Jesus had sympathy with the suffering, and was moved to minister consolation and relief.

1. The city, as its name indicated, was a pleasant place. But there is no place, however beautiful for situation or attractive for its prosperity, that is exempt from the misery which sin has brought into the world. Paradise is lost. The most delightful spot, where joy and merriment reign to-day, may be the home of woe and wailing to-morrow. Death came to Nain as it comes everywhere. A young man, rejoicing in the vigor of early manhood and full of rosy hopes, was stricken with disease. What affection could do to save him from its ravages and restore him to health and to his loving mother, was done. But death claimed its prey, and the young heart ceased to beat. It was all over, and the desolate heart of the mother was left alone with its dead boy and its dead hope. He was all

that she had. Her husband had been carried out before to the place of the dead. She was a widow. And this was her only son. Now he too was gone. The one lamb that she had yet was taken away; the one flower that had been left to cheer her was withered. There was nothing now for her but with her dead heart to follow her dead son as they carried him out beyond the city gate to lay him away among the dead. O God, it is a dreadful thing, this unnatural sundering of dearest ties and breaking of loving hearts which we call death! The soul sits in agony before the appalling presence at which all nature shudders, and a wail of woe is the only relief that all its skill can find. O ye who have had doubts about the dominion and dreadfulness of sin, look at death, and see what it has done! And that is only the beginning of its appalling work, which, if not arrested by a mightier power, goes on forever in its deadly dissolution. This widowed mother, in her deep affliction, felt its horrors. She wept, and would not be comforted; for her son was not, and what else had she yet on earth to give her cheer or bid her sorrowing soul be still?

2. But there was help at hand, though she knew it not. As the procession of mourning moved out of the city gate, another led by the Consolation of Israel was moving in. They met. The Lord saw the widow in her affliction and had compassion on her. He speaks, "Weep not." There does not seem to be much consolation in that. Why should she not weep when the waters have come in unto her soul? Does the Lord mean to deprive her of the little comfort that the breaking heart can yet find in tears? Not so, my brethren. He had compassion on the weeping widow, and meant to bring consolation to her in her deep affliction. It was the expression of His compassion. But what comfort could there be in telling her not to weep, when the crushing sorrow must ooze out

in tears? Those who have known affliction and experienced sympathy when it lay heavy upon them will hardly ask such a question. It is a comfort to know that some one cares for us and feels with us in our suffering. There is comfort therefore in kind words tenderly spoken, even if they have no other power than that of showing the sympathy which the heart feels. The tender tone of our Savior's voice as He spoke the words ministered some solace to the suffering mother. But that was not all. They were not powerless words that the great Prophet spake. He did not mean merely to express His compassion, nor yet to ask her to dry her tears without removing the cause which rendered them so natural and so necessary. They were the utterance of a compassion that was powerful to help, and that brought relief by removing the weight of woe that was upon her. Our Lord's words bring what they say. The poor widow ceased to weep, because the compassionate Lord took away the cause of her tears.

3. There is suffering and sorrowing in the world all around us still, for sin continues its destructive work and never fails to bring its attendant train of woes. There is thus opportunity afforded every day for speaking kind words to suffering souls, and blessed are they, and blessed is the work of those, who learn compassion of their Lord and, so far as they may, dry the tears of them that mourn. Learn sympathy with the suffering, and help them to bear their burden of sorrow; for "pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." James 1, 27. But we have something more consoling and more helpful to learn from the record of our Savior's compassion than that of following His noble example, worthy as this lesson is of our most devout attention. This compassionate Savior has not ceased to exist, and has not withdrawn His presence from

the earth. You know His words, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Matt. 28, 20. We do not see Him now, indeed, as the multitude who were bearing the dead body out of the gate of Nain, and as the weeping widow who mourned her only son, saw Him then. But He is with us still, and present among us with all the compassion and all the power that brought consolation in those days long gone by. Where there is bereavement, and where hearts are bowed down with the weight of woe, we may be sure that the Lord is near. And His compassion never fails. O suffering soul, look to Jesus, and hear His tender words, "Weep not." He means them for thee. The Lord is with you; dry your tears. That Lord has all power, put your trust in Him, and let not your heart be troubled.

II. That mighty power He shows in restoring the widow's son to life. "And He came and touched the bier; and they that bare him stood still. And He said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up and began to speak. And He delivered him up to his mother." That was a marvelous scene when Life met death, and commanded that king of terrors to surrender his prey. Let us look at it a little while, with minds intent to learn.

1. He who speaks is the Prince of life, and the power that goes out from Him is living and life-giving. "In Him was life," says the evangelist. John 1, 4. And the Lord Himself says: "As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself." John 5, 26. He was Himself the living God, the second person of the adorable Trinity, begotten of the Father from eternity; and when He, the Eternal Son, was made flesh and dwelt among us, the human nature which He assumed shared that life. He, the Word made flesh, is "the Way and the Truth and the Life." Death cannot

dwell in His presence. Death is separation from God, the Source of life. Where there is no sin, no turning away from God, there is no death. It is the unutterable horror of disturbance and dissolution that sin has introduced into the universe. And now comes the Savior from sin and death with life for the world. He Himself must die to rescue the lost, because man's life is forfeited and the Prince of Life can accomplish His redeeming work only by passing through death. But in Him is life that triumphs over every foe, and even death must succumb to His power. He lays down His life, but it is to rescue from death the souls that He loves. "Therefore doth my Father love me," He says, "because I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." John 10, 17. 18. And now this man of power comes and touches the bier upon which the dead man lies. It was an unusual proceeding thus to stop a funeral procession, but none of the multitude interfered or forbade the strange act. They were awed by His presence, though they knew Him not; for those who bore the dead body stood still. Quietly, as one who is conscious of His power even over death, He speaks the command, and the dead sits up and speaks. In Him was life, and even death could not resist the power of life that went out from Him. Quietly, as one who was used to exercise compassion, He delivers the living youth to his mother, and she weeps no more.

2. He spake the word, and it was done. "He said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise." It seems so bootless to address such words of command to a corpse. It cannot hear; its limbs are stark and stiff, and cannot obey; it is lifeless and lumpish like a log, and cannot move. In the light of our knowledge of death and the powers of dead matter, in the light of our knowledge of man and his

powerlessness in the presence of death, we marvel that such words were spoken to such a dead object. We reason rightly when we say that it is folly for any of us to ask a corpse to arise, because there is no possibility that it should obey. It cannot arise, and there is nothing in our words to remove the inability. But our reasoning is all astray when we conclude that because dead bodies will not and can not obey our commands, therefore it was useless for our Lord to speak thus to the dead man of Nain. He who said: "I say unto thee," was not a powerless man like us. It was the Lord that spoke, and His word had the power in it to accomplish what He commanded. The young man was dead, and could not obey; but the Lord who spoke had life in Himself, and the power of that life went out in His word and the dead must hear and obey. What is impossible with us is natural with Him. Nothing can resist His almighty will, and when He speaks the word of command, the power of that will is put in the words, and heaven and earth and hell must obey. Even the dead must hear, for the word that calls them conveys the power to awake them and make them hear. So it shall be when on the resurrection day the voice of the Lord shall call the dead to judgment. All that are in their graves shall hear His voice. His word brings the power that is necessary to execute its command. Therefore the text presents it as a matter of course that when the mighty Master gave the order, "he that was dead sat up, and began to speak." He was no longer dead, because the Prince of life had commanded him to arise, and His word had banished death and restored life.

3. And so the Prince of life still lives among men and speaks His powerful word for their quickening, that those who are spiritually dead may be raised up and speak His praises. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that

heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear, shall live." John 5, 24. 25. It seems bootless, too, to call to the corpses lying all around, dry bones of men whom the devil has slain, that they should arise; and many a preacher of little faith despairs of accomplishing any good results. He preaches to dead men, he says; and what is the use of that? But all men are by nature dead in trespasses and sins, and the Savior comes among us with life to overcome death. He is with us. The Prince of life, who can wake the dead, is among us; and He commands us to preach to the dead that they should arise. That Word cannot be preached in vain, for the mighty Lord is here. In Him is life, and the power of life goes out from Him through His word. He "hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." 2 Tim. 1, 10. That wakes the dead, and ministers power to the living. Hear the Lord's words; they will furnish all that is needed for our quickening and guidance and comfort and support in life and in death. "The words that I speak unto you," He tells us, "they are spirit and they are life." John 6, 63. When we are in darkness these words will give us light; when we are perplexed, they will give us counsel; when we are sorrowful, they will give us comfort; when we come to die, they will give us the victory over death and minister to us an entrance into the kingdom of eternal life and glory. It is true, in one respect, that at present the Savior does not show to us His compassion in the same solacing form in which it was shown to the sorrowing widow of Nain. Death enters our homes and makes our hearts desolate by snapping the cord that bound them to

those we love. We carry them out to the burying place, and no Prince of life meets us to give such efficacy to His tender "Weep not," as was given to the bereaved widow. We bury our dead, and go to our lonely home in sorrow. But the same compassionate Lord is really with us, though we see Him not, and means to show us the same mercy, though not just now. Only have patience; wait a little. O desolate mother, He will give you back your child. O all ye that mourn your dead, He will deliver them to you again. He has the power and He has the compassion. Only not just at this moment; it need not be just now; have a little patience and bide your time; He will surely do it. "I am the resurrection and the life," saith this mighty Helper; "he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" John 11, 25. 26. He gives spiritual life by His Word, and even though death come to such living men, they shall live forever. And their bodies too shall share the blessing of such life. "This is the will of Him that sent me," He assures us, "that every one which seeth the son and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." John 6, 40. It is but a little while until all this woe shall be overpast, and the victory of life over death shall be complete. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory," Col. 3, 4; and all His people shall dwell together for ever in the mansions of our Father's house.

III. One thing more our text speaks of. It is the glory which is given the Lord who wrought the miracle of raising the dead young man to life. "There came a fear on all; and they glorified God, saying, That a great Prophet is risen up among us, and that God hath visited His people. And this rumor of Him went forth throughout all Judea

and throughout all the region round about." The people feared; they spoke the praises of God; they spread the tidings of Jesus' power.

1. "There came a fear on all." It was the involuntary emotion produced by the presence of a wonderful person who exercised supernatural power. The expression does not mean that they trembled for their lives as when the lightning strikes or the cyclone roars. They stood in awe before the majesty of one who was more than man, and in such awe they involuntarily gave Him glory. In such a feeling there is always fear. The guilty soul does not feel safe in the presence of a Being who looks into the heart and has power to punish as well as to preserve and to deliver. "The wicked flee when no man pursueth." Men will not come to God as they are in their natural state. They are afraid of Him, because they feel that He has reason to be angry with them, and know that He has power to crush them. And even when such faith is wrought and the mercy of God is trusted, there remains and must remain a fear of God, though it is not slavish and does not conflict with the comfort and peace and joy which we have in a reconciled Father's presence. There is still fear, because He is recognized as God who is King over all and to whom all must give account. It is then such fear as the loving child has for its parents, who are reverenced all the more because they are loved not merely as human beings, but as father and mother. The fear that fell on the multitude who witnessed the raising of the widow's son, was the effect of the supernatural power exerted in their presence, and its existence in their soul was an unconscious testimony that here was more than man. It thus honored the Lord, even if those who felt the fear had not spoken a word.

2. But they did speak. They saw the mighty work and knew that it must emanate from a mighty person, and therefore they feared; "and they glorified God, saying,

That a great Prophet is risen up among us." Very likely they thought of the words of Moses: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me: unto Him ye shall hearken." Deut. 18, 15. The great Prophet whom the children of Israel waited for as their great Consolation, had indeed now come, and here was evidence of it before the eyes of this multitude. That they thought of Him when they saw this miraculous manifestation of power is indicated also in the other saying, "That God hath visited His people." The language is similar to that which Zacharias, filled with the Holy Ghost, used when he sang: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people; and hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David, as He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began." Luke 1, 68–70. The pious Israelites were ardently expecting the coming of their Lord to bring them salvation, and here was a compassionate Helper who spake as one having authority, and whose wonderful work of mercy and of power gave proof that He was not speaking vain words. Was not this the promised prophet? Even so; "God hath visited His people." The multitude heard and saw and felt, "and they glorified God" who "hath visited His people."

3. And that which made so deep an impression upon their own minds they did not suppress and bury away in silence. "This rumor of Him went forth throughout all Judea, and throughout all the region round about." In some instances there were special reasons in the circumstances of the times that moved our Lord to forbid the report of His miracles. But ordinarily the right thing to do is that which the heart is prompted to do when He manifests forth His glory in our presence: tell to others of the great Prophet in whom is our help. The people

gave glory to Jesus by spreading the evidence that He is the Messiah who was promised of old, that others too might learn to know Him and glorify God. All who experience the mercy of the Lord and know His power are to be witnesses for Him, that His name and salvation may be made known in all lands and all the earth become full of His glory.

This mighty Savior who has life in Himself and brings life and immortality to light by the Gospel, hath visited us also, and we have experienced the compassion which He shows to men. Let us cling more closely to Him, who is our Helper in life and gives us the victory over death. And whilst we live let us glorify Him, trusting His grace unto the salvation of our souls and doing His good will to the welfare of our fellow men, and telling all around that this is indeed the Lord that conquers death. Amen.

Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity.

LUKE 14, 1–11.

And it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day, that they watched Him. And behold there came a certain man before Him which had the dropsy. And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day? And they held their peace. And He took him, and healed him, and let him go; and answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day? And they could not answer Him again to these things. And He put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when He marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them, When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honorable man than thou be bidden of him; and he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place: and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that, when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then thou shalt have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Brethren beloved in the Lord:

In the Scriptures frequent mention is made of Pharisees. They were the most numerous and the most powerful sect of the Jews. Professing peculiar holiness, they separated themselves not only from the Gentiles, but also from other Jews who were less strict and scrupulous. They were therefore called the separatists, which is the meaning of the word Pharisees. Because of their seeming sanctity they were very popular, and held the highest offices in the church and were the most influential people in the community. But their sanctity was largely a mere

pretense. They wanted to appear righteous, but were satisfied with the appearance, even if there was no internal reality to correspond to it. Hence the word Pharisee has come to be only another name for hypocrite, and our Lord warns against the spirit of the sect. He says, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." Matt. 16, 6. That applies to us also in these latter days; for the leaven of the Pharisees is still at work in the world. Let us from the text learn better to understand it, that we may more effectually guard against it.

BEWARE OF THE LEAVEN OF THE PHARISEES.

See Pharisaism 1. *In its heartless persecution;* 2. *In its hollow ceremonialism;* and 3. *In its miserable self-exaltation.* May the Holy Spirit teach us to hate it and love righteousness.

I. The Spirit of the Pharisees becomes manifest, in the first place, in the trickery and treachery, in the caviling and fault-finding to which they resort at the feast; in short, in the heartless persecution of our Lord. "It came to pass, as He went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day, that they watched Him. And, behold, there was a certain man before Him which had the dropsy. And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day? And they held their peace. And He took him and healed him and let him go; and answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day? And they could not answer Him again to these things." The whole narrative shows the bitter prejudice of the Pharisees against our Lord, and their determination, at all hazards, to condemn Him, and to induce the people to reject and denounce Him.

1. Evidently with malicious intent they invite Him to the feast on the sabbath and present to Him the person afflicted with dropsy. He knew their thoughts, but He went. By going there He does not mean to teach us, that the righteous care not what company they are in, and that they go to a feast of the ungodly with the same delight that they sit at the table with saints. A man could not be righteous who had equal pleasure in the companionship of scoffers as in that of humble followers of Jesus. It is not unjust to judge a person by the company which he habitually keeps. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord." Ps. 1, 1. 2. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" 2 Cor. 6, 14. And yet we would be adopting the very spirit of carping and caviling which our text condemns, if we found fault with our Lord for accepting the invitation to the Pharisee's table. He who was without sin could go where it is not safe for sinners to go. We do not read that our Lord took His disciples with Him to the Pharisee's house, and this is not wholly without significance. And it is safe for all to go where the path of duty leads, though it would be dangerous to go from presumption or for pleasure to the scenes of temptation where we have no calling. Jesus was about His Father's business when He went, and taught the words of life and did the works of mercy for which He was sent, though here He performed His office among unsympathetic and treacherous foes. He knew what He was doing and what He could do, and knowing all He went to the house of this ruler among the sanctimonious Pharisees to eat bread.

2. And what a scene presented itself there! A com-

pany had gathered of prominent men who meant mischief, "and they watched Him." That He had compassion on the suffering and went about doing good among men they knew, and they laid their plans on the well-founded assumption that He would exercise mercy now and here as He did always and everywhere. "And, behold, there was a certain man before Him which had the dropsy." It was nothing astonishing that men in their misery should seek relief of the great Physician even in such a place as this. Suffering has little concern for the proprieties of formality. The man with the dropsy might therefore have been there seeking help even without any plotting on the part of the Pharisees. But the circumstances indicate that they were instrumental in getting him there, and that they meant to use him as a means of ensnaring the Savior. This is indicated not only by the statement that they watched Him, but also by the question which He puts to the lawyers and Pharisees. He answering, said, "Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?" They had spoken nothing; at least there is no record of anything said to which such a question should be an answer. But they had thought much, and Jesus knew their thoughts. These evidently were, as all the circumstances show, that if our Lord would heal this afflicted man on the Sabbath, they would have a plausible reason for denouncing Him. They could assume that He would do this. But even if He did not do it, their object would be accomplished; for He would then appear as one who claimed the power to heal, but who had not the mercy on the suffering which would induce Him to exercise His power, and that too would be a plausible reason for denouncing Him. It was a shrewdly laid snare, and they were confident of success in their persecuting plot. But He knew their thoughts and turned their dilemma against themselves. "Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?" Let the lawyers and Pharisees answer the question. But

"they held their peace." They professed to know all about the law and were very cunning in laying snares for the Savior whom they hated: could they not answer the simple question? The heartless persecutors had not thought of such a turn in the affair, and deemed it expedient to say nothing. Why? Because if they said, Yes, it is lawful, they could not condemn Him for doing it and might besides lose some reputation for legal scrupulousness; if they said, No, it is not lawful, the charge of unmercifulness might fall on them. They were completely nonplused, and the best thing they could do was to hold their peace and hang their heads. But the Lord was not deterred from His work of mercy. He healed the dropsical man and let him go, whatever His persecutors might think or say or do.

The heartlessness of their whole proceeding was manifest, and they had reason to hang their wretched heads in shame. They had employed the seeming courtesies of hospitality to set a treacherous trap for the Lord, and they had even meant to use the exercise of mercy as a means to justify the condemnation of the Innocent. It is a revelation of the spirit of Pharisaism as it exists in all ages. Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, who will unscrupulously employ even things most sacred in furtherance of their ungodly purposes, and yet all the while claim honor for their strict morality, like robbers that are very scrupulous in the division of their ungodly gains.

But our Lord was not done yet with these heartless men. He exposes still further the spirit of Pharisaism

II. In its hollow ceremonialism. For that question concerning the Sabbath reaches further than the case of the man who had the dropsy. It involves the whole question of obedience to the law. "Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?" That must be decided by the requirements of love, not by considerations of expediency, or of grammatical or logical probability. "Love is the fulfilling

of the law." Rom. 13, 10. Of this the Pharisee knows nothing. Therefore, when these heartless men "held their peace," the Lord, having done what love and mercy required, answered the thoughts of their hearts, saying, "Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day? And they could not answer Him again to these things." The heartless fellows, who could see very well that in such a case, where their own property was at stake and the love of money would furnish a motive for action, they might strain a point and help the poor ox or ass, did not know exactly how it would be if a man were in misery, because there was nothing in their hollow souls to determine such a point. Therefore they said nothing; for they had no love, and had nothing to say.

1. The law was to them a mere regulation for outward action, because they did not recognize its requirement of the heart. Ceremonial law and moral law was to them one and the same, because the ceremonial prescribed was to them the essence of the requirement. Whether a man hated his brother or loved him was all the same to them, if he only did not kill; whether he loved the ordinances of God's house or not made no difference to them, if he only offered his sacrifices and paid his tithes. Therefore the Lord says: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment; but I say unto you, That whosoever shall be angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment." Matt. 5, 21. 22. The deed is committed in the heart, even though no blood be shed by the hand. This the Pharisees, with all their punctilious externalism, did not recognize and could not understand. They looked no further than the outward act, and their notions of holiness were satisfied when that squared with the commandment. In this regard

they were very strict; indeed they were all the more rigid in their insistance upon outward obedience because they knew nothing of the inward. Hence our Lord says: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith." Matt. 23, 23. They were so scrupulous in regard to external obedience that they even did more than was demanded, so far as the outward form and performance was concerned; but the main thing, the obedience of the heart, they neglected and rejected. All obedience was to them mere form; all righteousness was mere hollow ceremonialism, as heartless as their invitation of Jesus to the feast and their plotting to condemn Him there, if He showed mercy to the man afflicted with dropsy.

2. This is manifested especially in their sanctimonious sabbatarianism. The law prescribing six days' labor and the seventh day's rest furnished ample opportunity to punctilious work-mongers for the exercise of their ingenuity and the exhibition of their scrupulosity. What actions might be performed without conflicting with the prescribed rest, and what actions must be pronounced inconsistent with it,—that is not so easy to determine when there is no principle to decide it but that of bodily rest. Does it violate the law to walk? Does it violate the law to take a walk? Does it violate the law to walk to the temple? Is it a sin to move the hand? Is it a sin to move the hand with medicine in it? Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day? A strict construction of the bodily rest and a pitiful ignoring of all moral and spiritual meaning in the commandment would find many a perplexing question in respect to the observance of the Sabbath. But how hollow was the ceremonial punctiliousness of the Pharisees is seen by our Lord's rebuke of the treacherous men who laid the snare at the ruler's house. They did

not deny that they would perform the labor of pulling an ox or an ass out of a pit on that day of rest, because it would not seem necessary or right to let their property perish; but to show mercy and relieve human suffering—what necessity is there for that? A heart that has no mercy can see no such necessity. It can see only the necessity of remaining inactive on the Sabbath, though it should be in the presence of suffering that might easily be relieved, because the law says, On the seventh day thou shalt not do any work.

The third commandment did require rest from bodily labor, to which six days were to be devoted. We must not so spiritualize the law as to empty it of its plain import. There is a ceremonial element in it, and that was obligatory upon the Jewish people as well as the moral purpose to which it was tributary. The error of the Pharisees did not lie in recognizing that obligation. They were right in that. But they overlooked the whole design of God in making known His will. Their whole obedience was that of the lips and hands, while the heart did not obey. Their work was hollow and heartless. And that was the trouble with their sabbatarianism. They had all sorts of scruples that never could arise where the import of the law is understood and love is therefore seen to be its fulfillment. They troubled themselves about the form while they disregarded the substance, and that made their whole system a hollow ceremonialism and their whole life a heartless sham. Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees.

There is no point in which there is more danger of the introduction of that leaven than that of the Sabbath. We Christians have nothing to do with the ceremonial law, except as it forms part of the history of God's people in the time of their preparation for the coming of Christ. The Jews were required to observe some forms and ceremonies that looked forward to that coming, and had their

importance as prophecies and promises of future blessings and as preparations for them, not as having any moral import and permanent value in themselves. They were therefore of merely temporary obligation to secure an end that should be reached in time. When that was attained, the means were no longer needed and the obligation ceased. They all looked to the coming of Christ, and when He came, the whole ceremonial law was abolished. Now it is the leaven of Pharisaism when men try to bind upon the consciences of their fellow-men observances in virtue of mere ceremonial law, and when men allow themselves to be troubled about such observances. In the new dispensation we have no such law. The two sacramental ceremonies of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are obligatory indeed, but it is Pharisaism even to observe these as if they rested only on ceremonial law. They are means of grace, instituted as such, and have precious promises attached. The command to use them is indeed not founded in the eternal requirements of righteousness, and therefore forms no part of the law originally planted in the human heart and always in force; it does not in that sense belong to the moral law, which is of universal obligation; but it is founded in the wisdom and mercy of God, who has chosen these means to convey to us the benefits of our Redeemer's life and death for our salvation, and now asks us to use them that we may share those benefits. Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and do not use the holy sacraments as mere forms, without faith in the promises connected with them and the grace which they convey. We have no mere ceremonial laws in the new dispensation. Least of all is the Sabbath an exception. It is pitiful to see men, often well-meaning and God-fearing men too, go about on Sunday with all the scrupulosity and punctiliousness of Pharisees, even eating their meals or driving their horses to church with trembling lest

they should violate the sabbath law by some action that might be construed into work, or some motion that might seem inconsistent with rest. They turn the liberty of the children of God into a slavish ceremonialism, and as that is not an outgrowth of love, the whole tendency of it is to hollowness and heartlessness. It is the more pitiful because it is in direct opposition to the admonition of the apostle: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days; which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ." Col. 2, 16. 17. The Jewish laws about meats and moons and sabbaths had their purpose, but they are not laws for us, who have the substance which they were designed to foreshadow. Beware of the leaven of Pharisaic sabbatarianism, and hold fast to the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free. We celebrate the day of our Lord's resurrection, the first day of the week, not the sabbath, which is the seventh; and we observe it not as if all action on that day were sin and all inaction were holiness, but that we may worship God and hear His Word in the assembly of His people. That is the kernel of the third commandment, and therefore our Catechism rightly explains it as meaning that "we should fear and love God that we may not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it." Do not be led away from the simplicity in Christ to a hollow formalism which will not recognize love as the fulfilling of the law, but seeks a righteousness in outward action or rest. Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees.

III. One point more is mentioned to characterize the Pharisees and to impress on our minds the warning against their spirit and doctrine. It is that of their miserable self-exaltation. "He put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when He marked how they chose out the chief rooms, saying unto them, When thou art bidden of any

man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room, lest a more honorable than thou be bidden of him, and he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place, and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; and when he that bade thee cometh he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher; then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." The character of the people with whom our Lord was dealing is thus further described as proud and arrogant, and the warning against them is enforced by showing the folly of their self-exaltation.

1. They were a proud people who, instead of walking humbly before God, claimed the highest places and sought honor among men. Even their sanctity was only a means of gratifying their unhallowed thirst for praise. Our Lord evidently refers to them and their doings when He says: "When thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men." "When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men." Matt. 6, 2–5. To a sincere child of God this is astonishing. What is the difference, when we want to glorify God by relieving suffering or when we want to make our wants known to God by prayer, whether any human being knows of our almsgiving or of our praying or not? But that is not the feeling of corrupt human nature. The same thing is observable in our times also. Men want honor for themselves; for the glory of God they by nature have no concern whatever. And this human nature crops out also in the churches. Not only do men seek the high

places in society and in the State, the ambition for honors and for office being everywhere noticeable, but even among the members of the churches such littleness is often seen. Even there men give alms to be seen of men; even there men pray to be heard of men; even there it is not the alms and the help which they afford, and not the prayers and the gifts which they secure, that are in the mind, but the glory which is given them for their good deeds and good words. So much is this the case that even among professing Christians there are those to be found who say of others that they never pray, because they never pray to be seen and heard of men. O brethren, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. Seek the glory of God alone, and walk in humility before Him, whose grace is your only help.

2. And see the folly of Pharisaic self-exaltation. It defeats its own purpose. It leads to abasement. Is it not much wiser to take a lower place at a feast, and go up higher when asked to do so, than to take the high place and be invited to go lower down? What a humiliation, what a mortification that is to a man, and especially to a man that is seeking honors! But that is likely to be the effect when presumption and arrogance become manifest. Boldness and impudence may at times succeed in getting high places; but as soon as the self-exaltation is evident, the honors will be withheld and the ambitious end is not attained. Many an arrogant person has experienced the effects of his presumption, and, being asked to give a worthier person place, has begun with shame to take the lowest room. The rule is that whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, sooner or later.

But the text says that our Lord put forth a parable to the proud persons who chose out the chief rooms. That implies that the purpose is not merely to show how such self-exaltation works in the relations of this life, but

also to point out its effects in the sphere of the spiritual. Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted, is true also in the kingdom of God. And that is the lesson that we are especially to learn. The proud Pharisee, who imagines that God is under obligations to him for his piety, shall be abased; because such a soul has not yet become conscious of its sinfulness and damnableness, and has not fled for refuge to the only hope set before us. Abasement must come for the impenitent sinner. On the other hand, the humble soul that knows of no merit and feels its unworthiness shall be exalted; for trusting only in the grace of God, it is clothed through faith in the righteousness of Jesus and shall receive the crown of glory. For that reason especially, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. It is a system of self-righteousness that excludes the grace of God in Christ, and leaves the sinner, with all his vain conceit of his merit and worthiness, in his sin and damnation.

Dear brethren, you have learned that Jesus Christ has come into the world to save sinners, and as sinners you have come to Him for salvation through His abounding grace. Let not the devil and the world and the flesh draw you away from Him through the leaven of the Pharisees. You are saved by grace, trust not in yourselves and seek not your own praise. Grace turns the heart to God; do not flatter yourselves that you are serving Him when you go through certain forms without any heart in them. See that you cling to Jesus alone as your Savior, and abound in good fruits to the glory of God. Amen.

Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity.

MATT. 22, 34–46.

But when the Pharisees had heard that He had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked Him a question, tempting Him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is He? They say unto Him, The son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call Him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call Him Lord, how is He his son? And no man was able to answer Him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask Him any more questions.

Dear Brethren in Christ:

The Sadducees had asked our Lord a caviling question about the resurrection, and He had exposed their ignorance and unbelief and had put them to silence. Now the Pharisees took up the matter with the hope of better success. A lawyer, who was not one of the worst of his class and who showed himself not wholly averse to learning the truth, as we see from St. Mark's more full account of the occurrence, "asked Him a question, tempting Him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" As the Pharisees measured the importance of commandments by the external work enjoined, and all were not agreed as to which is the most important duty to be performed, perhaps he thought that any answer which

our Lord might give would create dissension and provoke hostility. Perhaps he thought of the right answer, which was certainly not unknown to the Jewish teachers, and expected our Lord, who accepted the worship of His disciples, to condemn Himself by declaring that there is but one God and that He alone is the object of supreme love and worship. The subsequent question concerning the Christ would seem to indicate this. It shows too how ready our Lord was to give further instruction where there was any willingness to hear and learn. At any rate the lawyer was satisfied, and neither he nor the rest of the company had any more caviling questions to ask. But the narrative contains valuable lessons for all time. Let us learn them and apply them to ourselves. They all center in the question

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

There is in the narrative a lesson concerning the law and a lesson concerning the Liberator from its curse. The question may therefore be separated into two other questions. 1. What think ye of His exposition of the law? 2. What think ye of His representation of His person? May God give us grace to think righteous thoughts, and to escape the curse of the law and embrace the blessing of the Gospel!

I. *What think ye of Christ's exposition of the law?* Let us earnestly look at His teaching, then examine our thoughts respecting it.

1. In answer to the lawyer's question, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On

these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." The lawyer could not dispute the correctness and thoroughness of the answer, but confessed that to love God above all and our neighbor as ourselves "is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices." Mark 12, 33. For our Lord points to the very kernel of the law when He condenses it all into the one requirement of love. "Love is the fulfilling of the law." Rom. 13, 10. All that Moses and the prophets taught regarding the duties of man to God is contained in the one word love Love God; love God with all your mind and strength; love God supremely; let nothing enter your heart to interfere with your love to God. That is all the law requires. That will regulate all your thoughts and sentiments and words and actions, and will render them all acceptable to God. When your whole soul is His, when you give your whole self to Him in love, how could there be anything in your inward or outward life which is not pervaded by that love and which, being thus pervaded, is not pleasing in His sight? How could there be a loving thought which should disregard or contravene the will of Him we love? How could there be a loving word or act that would offend the loving Lord whose name is Love? That which displeases Him is the want of love in the heart and the consequent want of love in the life. That which offends Him is the lovelessness which withholds the honor and service due to Him and claims it for self. What displeases Him is the sin that is in us and that renders us an idolatrous race. We have loved the world, so that we would not surrender its honors and its riches and its pleasures when the God of love required it for our own everlasting good; we have loved ourselves, so that we preferred our own will to the will of our Lord and our God, and, harboring foolish thoughts of liberty and independence, chosen rather to be slaves of Satan than freemen of the Lord. "Love God

with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind,"—that is the will of God, and that is what the law which declares His will requires. And when we look at our relations to our fellow men and inquire concerning our duties to them, the requirement still is love. The second commandment is not declared to be equal to the first in every respect. But it is like unto it. We are not commanded to love our neighbor with all our heart and all our soul and all our mind. Supreme love belongs only to the Supreme Being. To Him everything is subordinate. Even the love of father and mother, of husband or wife, of son or daughter must not be permitted to come in conflict with love to God. He is over all and must be loved above all. Whatever stands in the way of that love must be cast aside. But the second commandment is like unto the first and great commandment. It too requires love. All men should love God with their whole heart, and all should love each other under Him. None should think himself greater or better than the other and in such thought prefer his own welfare to that of his neighbors. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. We must not only not seek our own happiness at the expense of others, but must not prefer our own happiness to that of others. If we love God with all our hearts, His will must be ours, and His will is that all should be alike happy. Just as soon as we place our comfort and prosperity higher in our thoughts and desires than the comfort and prosperity of our fellow men, we are actuated by selfishness which violates love. Then we do not love our neighbor as ourselves, and we do not love God supremely, who commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves. On those two commandments of love to God with all our powers and love to our neighbors as to ourselves hang all the law and the prophets. Everything that is required of men in all the laws and ordinances of

God is embraced in the law of love. We may even go a step further, and say that even the gospel which the prophets preached so far hangs on those commandments, that it brings the help which was rendered necessary by man's failure to keep this law and furnishes the grace which was necessary to restore him to obedience. For Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, which came upon us for our transgression, and gives us His Holy Spirit that our hearts may be filled with love, which is the fulfilling of the law. All the law and the prophets preach love, and the misery of its loss, and the blessedness of the remedy supplied by God's love for the restoration of man to his original state of love.

2. And now what think ye of Christ's presentation of the law? I know what some think. When such demands are made upon man they think that the whole matter is overstrained and that men are required to be righteous overmuch. Have you never heard them reason against the application of Christ's principles of morality to practical life? Have you never heard them allege that they are impracticable and that a strict adherence to them would undermine the Church? Have you never heard them say, for instance, that if you warn against secret associations on the ground of their antagonism to the supreme love of God, or condemn lotteries and games of chance, or raise objections to insurance schemes and similar contrivances, on the ground of their inconsistency with the law of love, people will maintain their right of looking to their own interests and will refuse to submit to such rigid morality because it is oppressive? I have heard such things, and have wondered at the argumentation as coming from professed disciples of Him whose teaching we have before us in our text. These people do not desire to array themselves against Christ and His exposition of the law. They do not mean to take such a position.

But they practically occupy the same ground as His confessed opponents, who allege against Him that His principles are visionary and plainly impracticable. And in one respect they are right. The morality thus presented is not visionary, but founded in the eternal righteousness of God. But that in man's fallen condition it is so far impracticable, that no man meets the demand and satisfies the requirements of divine justice, is true. The law is spiritual, and man is carnal, sold under sin. But what do people want, then? Do they want the unchangeable God to abandon His holiness and righteousness and conform His requirements to the changed condition of His creature? Do they want the standard of life to be lowered so as to adapt it to the selfishness and wickedness of men? Do they want the Savior or His disciples to teach a love that is full of sentimental pretensions, but has no regard for the rights and needs and happiness of others? O brethren, do not lend your ear to the wordly wisdom that would discrown our King and overthrow all righteousness. Hearken to the Savior's teaching, and learn the perfect holiness which it inculcates. It will not be solacing to the Pharisee in your bosom; it will humble you in your own eyes, and lead you to shame and confusion of face. But that is salutary. It is the abasement that must precede exaltation. When you once know yourself to be a sinner —a poor, forlorn, condemned sinner—there is hope for you, as there is no hope for those who deny the meaning of the law and cast off its claims, so long as they continue in that course of folly. What think ye of Christ's teaching? Is He right? Then know yourselves condemned by the law, that ye may earnestly flee for refuge to Him, the Deliverer from its curse, and be saved. That is what He taught for and died for: let the law be your schoolmaster to lead you to the gospel!

But some think other thoughts. They do not want

the law to be anything but holy. They do not expect that the righteous Lord will accommodate Himself to human unrighteousness, and will proclaim a law that justifies sin. But they think that, although our Lord's exposition of the law is right and good, it does not condemn them. They think that they are right and good also, and that our Lord's demand is exactly what they have rendered. With the young man mentioned in another place, they are disposed to say: "All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?" Matt. 19, 20. The same result is reached, whether we lower the requirement of the law, so as to adapt it to our condition, or whether we exalt ourselves, so that our condition is raised in our esteem to the requirements of the law. And this latter course is pursued by many. They will not see the sinfulness of their sin, but flatter themselves that their lives are such as the law requires. And because they are righteous in their own conceit, the whole purpose of the law, by which comes the knowledge of sin, is not attained in their case. They will not come to Jesus, the Savior from sin and its damnation, because they will not see their need of a Savior. They think that they have fulfilled the law, and that when death and damnation is denounced against transgressors, it cannot mean them. Brethren, what think ye of Christ when He expounds the law and bids you flee from the wrath to come? It is a vital question. If you do not see your sin and dread its consequences, how can you heed the good tidings of a Savior sent to redeem and save you? But if you know the law to require perfect holiness, and your own hearts to be unholy, then you will be ready to hear about a Deliverer from the body of this death. Therefore,

II. *What think ye of Christ's teaching concerning Himself?* After the Sadducees and Pharisees had been silenced, it was our Lord's turn to ask a question. Prob-

ably this was induced by the apparent sincerity of the lawyer, of whom the Savior said that he was not far from the kingdom of God. Jesus was always willing to teach those who were willing to learn. Possibly too He saw in the caviling question of the lawyer an implicit censure of His acceptance of divine honors, as if he meant to accuse Him of a violation of the first and great commandment, and therefore points to the proof of the Messiah's divinity as contained in the Old Testament. In any case He would call attention to Himself as the mighty Savior from the curse of the law, which requires the holiness that no man possesses and pronounces its condemnation on all transgressors. "While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He? They say unto Him, The Son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call Him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on my right hand till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool? If David then call Him Lord, how is He his Son? And no man was able to answer Him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask Him any more questions." The teachers of the Jews certainly could have obtained a better knowledge of the promised Savior than that which they manifested in their controversies with Jesus, and He desired to give them light from the Old Testament which they professed to teach. But His ultimate object was to lead them and us to a knowledge of Himself as the promised Messiah and the Savior of the world. He shows us who He is, that we may think rightly of Him and His gracious work.

1. That Christ was to be the Son of David is clear from the Scriptures, and the New Testament genealogies show that in Jesus of Nazareth this was strictly fulfilled. But He who was the Son of David had existed before David's time and before all time. That is what He desired

the Pharisees and what He desires us to see and understand. He therefore refers to the record in the 110. psalm. If He was the Son of David, how could David call Him his Lord? It is not customary for the father to be subject to the son, neither is that the ordinance of God. Nay, more. Jehovah, the Omnipotent Ruler of the universe, said to this Son of David, "Sit Thou on my right hand till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." The Son of David is David's Lord, and that Lord shares the power and majesty of Jehovah, which is the meaning of the words, "Sit Thou on my right hand." And because He shares the divine power and majesty, no enemy shall be able to triumph over Him. He goes forth conquering and to conquer, and every foe must be put under His feet. In short, He is very God of very God, begotten of the Father from eternity, to whom is given all power in heaven and in earth. This the Pharisees could not gainsay, and they were silent. And neither can any man gainsay it now. Our blessed Redeemer is God over all, blessed for ever. But He was not the less David's Son. The eternal Son of God in the fullness of time became man for our salvation. He was born of the house and lineage of David. "When the fullness of the time was come God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Gal. 4, 4. 5. You see from this why David's Lord became David's Son. He, the Son of God, begotten of the Father from eternity, became true man, born of the Virgin Mary, to redeem them that were under the law. That law condemns us all. We are under its righteous curse, and no man or angel could deliver us from it. Its claim upon us stands for ever, and its righteous requirements must be fulfilled or its righteous sentence of eternal death must be executed. Only God could help us, and He so loved the world that He gave us His only Son to save us. That

Son was made flesh and dwelt among us. He was born into this world as a human child and was subject to the law, fulfilling its requirements and paying its penalty in our place. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same, that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham." Heb. 2, 14–16. He who was God over all, blessed for ever, was born of the seed of Abraham, of the house and lineage of David, to live and labor and suffer and die on earth for the salvation of our lost race; and He accomplished His gracious work and now proclaims salvation to all people. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed." Is. 53, 5.

2. And now, what think ye of this Christ? It is not a matter of indifference what ye think. It is plain that we have not fulfilled the commandments and have not the ability to fulfill them. There is no hope of salvation from that source. It is plain also that those who in their hearts reject Christ have no part or lot in the great salvation which He has wrought. He that believeth not remains under the law and its condemnation. "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Rom. 3, 20–24. Only

those that believe shall inherit eternal life, because only they lay hold of the righteousness which our Savior acquired for us and offers to us in the Gospel. Therefore St. Paul writes to the Galatians: "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." Gal. 5, 4. 5. And yet millions who call themselves Christians still think that their good works, their deeds of the law, will save them, and other millions think that such errors make no difference if only the life is upright. Brethren, let not the devil delude you. There is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus, and there is no other way to become partaker of His righteousness but that of appropriating it as our own by faith. If Christ were only a great Teacher, who expounds the law and shows us what God requires, and only a great Example, from whose labor of love we can learn how we ought to live, we would be lost, hopelessly lost; for that is our damnation that we are not holy as the law requires us to be and that we have not lived as the example of our Lord shows us that we ought to live. But thanks be to God, Christ is a mighty Savior who hath redeemed us and justified us freely by His grace through faith in His name. For the sake of your peace in time and your happiness in eternity think of Christ as the Gospel teaches you, and give Him the glory of your salvation on earth and in heaven for ever. To this end may the Lord bless the meditations of this day and increase our faith in His gracious Word. Amen.

Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity.

MATT. 9, 1–8.

And He entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into His own city. And, behold, they brought to Him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy: Son be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee. And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth. And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith He to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house. But when the multitudes saw it, they marveled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.

Dear Brethren:

The occurrence described in our text took place at Capernaum, where our Lord spent a large part of His time during His ministry, and which is therefore called His own city. A large multitude had assembled to see and hear Him. Among these were doctors and lawyers, the chief men and teachers of the time, and some of them had come from other places, to which the tidings of Jesus' words and works had spread. He was in the house, and this was so crowded with people that when friends brought a palsied man to be healed they could not effect an entrance. But their zeal was not to be baffled. St. Luke narrates that "when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus." In that country the houses were usually built with flat roofs and with stairways to reach the

housetop from the outside, and, where the houses were close together, neighbors could pass on the roof from one to the other. The sick man was thus brought to the Lord by the way of the housetop, and let down through an opening made in the tiling. Such faith and perseverance pleased the great Physician and He healed the paralytic. But the root of the disease lay deeper than the bodily ailment, and there are indications that the palsied man felt this. He was told to be of good cheer not only because of the healing of his body, but because of the healing of his soul. "Thy sins be forgiven thee," that was the comfort imparted. And that is the gift that we all need in order to be of good cheer. Jesus lives; Jesus is with us still; and

JESUS FORGIVES SINS.

Let us endeavor to understand and realize the blessed truth. For this purpose let us consider: 1. *What that means;* 2. *How that is possible;* and 3. *What that effects.* May the Lord give us attentive hearts.

I. We are so familiar with the statement, that Jesus forgives sins, that we are in danger of overlooking its import and missing the comfort which it is designed to convey. What does it mean? It points to the fact that there is upon us a horrible thing called sin, that because of it we are under a dreadful curse, and that from this fearful thing with its fearful doom the blessed Savior sets us free.

1. Sin is a horrible thing. Men often speak lightly of it; they often practice it as if it amounted to nothing; they often love it and seek their happiness in it; but it is a horrible thing. It is the transgression of God's law. It is separation from God. It is rebellion against God. And God is the source of all light and life and love and bliss. Sin is therefore darkness and death and malice and misery.

All that earth and hell know of gloom and wretchedness is concentrated in the word sin. It is going away from the Father and losing ourselves in the wilds and wastes of a dark and cheerless world; it is feeding upon ashes and famishing in eager sight of the husks which the swine eat, while in our Father's house, from which we are fugitives, there is abundance; it is serving the devil while the soul flatters itself with the devil's delusion that it is free because it has sundered itself from God and all that is good. Sin is a horrible thing. It makes men fools and makes the fools miserable, though they think themselves wise and try to imagine themselves happy, or at least on the way to become happy. The devil, who first sinned and sundered himself from God and was doomed to eternal woe, laughs in his dark and dismal den as he views the work which he has accomplished on earth by the introduction of sin, with all its disease and pain and death, and all its wrong and cruelty and inhumanity and brutality before the final darkness of death is reached. Men often speak lightly of sin, and often treat it lightly, but it is a horrible thing.

2. And its horrible consequences go on for ever. It entails an everlasting curse. The sinner is a failure among the creatures of God, and misses his destiny. All other creatures, except the fallen angels, who are also damned by the horrible thing, attain their end, but man misses his mark and goes wrong. He was made in the image of God and was designed to live in communion with God in righteousness and true holiness, and thus to share the eternal light and life and bliss in which God dwells. But, seduced by Satan, who had rebelled against God and goodness and happiness, he chose a path of his own, which could not lead to the goal that God had fixed and that could be reached only in the way of God's appointment. The way of his choice was the devil's way.

While he supposed that he was taking an independent course and becoming like God in his freedom from all authority, he was in fact a dupe of Satan, and became Satan's slave. Sundered from the source of all life and happiness, he now experienced the result. Death and damnation came. Pains and aches, sorrows and sufferings, disease and death were inevitable. They are the horrible results of the horrible thing called sin. And the horrors do not end when the present life ends. The soul lives on in an everlasting death. It continues to exist, though it exists in separation from God, the source of all life, and thus exists for ever in death. The sinner by his sin has turned away from God, and that is misery. God made him for holiness, and for happiness in holiness. He chose unrighteousness, and that must lead to the opposite of the happiness to which holiness leads. The curse is thus upon the sinner. And it rests upon him as long as he exists. When he dies, the pangs of the second death take hold upon him. "These go away into everlasting punishment," says our Lord. Sin, the horrible thing, lives on for ever in the sinful soul, and the curse upon the horrible thing abides for ever, because sin remains unrighteousness and God remains righteous through all eternity.

3. From this dreadful thing with its dreadful consequences Jesus delivers us. That is the comfort which our text gives us. He says, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee." Of course that does not mean that the horrible thing does not exist, or that the horrible thing is a harmless accident. It means that it does exist and that it is horrible. But it means also that Jesus has provided a remedy for it. He is the great Physician who can heal also that great disease, which is the root and source of every disease and every woe that afflicts humanity. He forgives sin. That means that He stops the dreadful consequences so far as the pardoned sinner is concerned.

When you forgive a man a debt, you do not try afterwards to collect the money of him. He practically does not owe you anything after you have forgiven him. So it is with pardoned sin. We are guilty, but when we are pardoned God treats us as if we had never sinned. The debt is all cancelled. There is then no more condemnation to us. The curse of God is no longer on us. We still deserve punishment, because as a matter of fact we have sinned and are guilty; but He does not deal with us after our deserts and does not treat us as guilty, because He has forgiven us the debt. That is what forgiveness means. The death and damnation that are due to sin are not visited upon us when our sin is forgiven. We escape the punishment, because God does not impute the sin; that is, He is willing in mercy to treat us as if we had not sinned and had not merited the punishment. Therefore the psalmist sings: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." Ps. 32, 1. 2. When our sin is forgiven, the curse of God upon us on account of the horrible thing is removed, and we are free from the death and damnation which are its due. But if that be the meaning the tidings that Jesus forgives sins seem too good to be true. We must therefore inquire

II. How this is possible. This will become apparent if you consider that He is God, that He is gracious, and that He has rendered satisfaction.

1. When our Lord said to the palsied man, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee," those who were learned in the law saw very well that when He claimed such power He was claiming divine prerogatives. It is no doubt plain to all of you that only he against whom an offense is committed has the right to pardon it. If any one does you a wrong, you can not concede to your

neighbor the right to exempt him from its penalty. You can forgive the wrong, but your neighbor can not. He must come to you, if he wants forgiveness. But all sin is transgression of God's law, and therefore God alone can forgive sin. Therefore, when Jesus pronounced forgiveness to the palsied man, "Behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth." St. Luke's narrative brings out the point more fully. He says: "The scribes and Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Luke 5, 21. They were right in their judgment that forgiving sin belongs only to God. No creature can remit the punishment which God imposes upon those who violate His law. He is Lord, and He will not give His glory to another. God alone can forgive sins. But the scribes were not therefore right when they accused Jesus of blasphemy. They had not uttered the accusation, but He read their thoughts, and showed by reading them that they were false. Who can see into the hearts of men but God alone? But Jesus is God, and therefore could forgive sins as He could discern their inmost thoughts. "And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith He to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose and departed to his house." To understand this it must be observed that forgiveness of sin is not a thing that can be proved by external evidence. When a person says, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," there is no sign by which the eye could see whether the power is really exerted and the forgiveness really takes place. The palsied man believed the Lord's words and realized their truth. His sins were forgiven, and by faith he knew it. But others

could not see whether the words were effectual or not. The scribes did not believe that they were effectual, and charged the Lord with blasphemy in claiming to do what only God can do, and what they thought He could not do, because they thought Him a mere man. Therefore He would furnish them with an evidence which could be appreciated by sense. The power to heal the palsied man with a mere word also belongs only to God. Jesus could say to him, "Arise and walk" just as easily as He could say, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." But they could see by the effect of the former words whether He had the power or not. And because His compassion prompted Him to heal the suffering man, He spake the words, and the man was made whole and went to his home. This they could see, and their accusing thoughts were proved false. He is true God, and He has the power to forgive sins. Therefore "when the multitude saw it they marveled, and glorified God which had given such power unto men." For the great power was given to humanity in Christ, who was true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, and the power given to Him exists among men still. Jesus is still among us every day, and richly and daily forgives us and all believers all our sins. For He not only has the power, but

2. He is gracious, and therefore has the will to forgive now, as He had the will when He saw the faith of the palsied man and those who had brought him to be healed. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." Eph. 2, 8. 9. What we have to bring before God is only our sin, and that is our condemnation. There is nothing in us that could render us worthy of God's gift. We are miserable, and He pities us; He is merciful and helps us. Nothing could be more stupid and unreasonable than to suppose that He forgives

us because we have merited favors at His hand. Of such a thought intelligent men should be ashamed, not only because it detracts from the Savior's merit and mercy, but also because it exposes their folly. How could those who are guilty before God and who are condemned by His righteous law have any claim of favor upon the righteous Giver of the law? The thought is contradictory. We are condemned in righteousness; how then could we present any claim of exemption from condemnation on grounds of righteousness? We have sin, and therefore merit damnation. That is all we merit, and that is all that we can merit. But that must not dishearten us or drive us to despair. Jesus is gracious, and He forgives sins. He is able and He is willing to deliver us from this death. Only come to Him and trust His mercy. "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near; let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." Is. 55, 6. 7. We have sinned and deserved eternal banishment from the presence of the Lord; but He is gracious, and has assured us that "him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." John 6, 37.

3. But how can these things be, when He who is merciful and gracious is also just? Has He not warned us that the wages of sin is death? Does not His righteousness require the condemnation of the sinner? Has He not pronounced such condemnation in His holy law as the penalty of violation? How then can Jesus forgive sins, even if He is God and is abundant in mercy? Will He violate His justice and disregard His own word? Such questions are natural, and have been asked again and again when the sweet comfort of forgiveness of sin is preached in Jesus' name. Perhaps some of you have asked them, and in your thoughts are asking them now.

Perhaps Satan, who is a foe of all peace and happiness, has raised doubts in the minds of some of you on the ground of such questions, and has thus despoiled you of the consolation offered in Christ. But Satan is deceiving you when he tells you that these things cannot be. Whether you understand it or not—whether you can see into it or not—hold fast the precious words, addressed to you as well as to the palsied man in our text, "Son, be of good cheer: thy sins be forgiven thee." Trust Him who has all power in heaven and on earth: He would not say it, if it were not possible to do it and if it were not so. But God is merciful in this also, that He tells us how it is possible. What our wisdom could not devise, He has accomplished. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." John 3, 16. 17. The righteousness of God demands that the law should be fulfilled, or death must ensue. But man could not fulfill it, since that horrible thing, sin, had rendered him incompetent and powerless. And the righteous doom of death was therefore upon us. But God pitied us. He was merciful, and did not want this creature damned, though he deserved it. So He sent His own dear Son into the world to take our place. He became a man and fulfilled all righteousness for all men. That is the reason why He was made of a woman and made under the law. He did it "to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." So all righteousness was fulfilled for all humanity. And because mankind, whose place He assumed under the law, had transgressed and continued to transgress the holy commandments, and were thus already under condemnation, He took that curse upon Himself and died in our stead. He died for all, that all

might escape the wages of sin. "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Rom. 5, 6. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Gal. 3, 13. All that God requires of man is thus rendered by the man Christ Jesus, who took our place, and who was able to make full satisfaction for all, because He was true God as well as true man, and therefore could bear the whole burden and pay the whole debt of the human race. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Rom. 8, 1. Those who by faith put on Christ have share in all His righteousness. In Him they have fulfilled all the demands of justice and suffered all the penalty of not fulfilling them. Do you not see now how it is possible for Jesus to forgive sins? Does righteousness require that I must fulfill all righteousness again, when I have once fulfilled it in Christ? Does righteousness require that I should be punished again for my sin when I have once been punished for it in Christ? The Savior has rendered perfect satisfaction, and those who believe in Him are looked upon as in Him and all His merit avails for them. Their sin was imputed to Christ, who died for it, and His righteousness is imputed to us. We are thus delivered from the curse of sin; it is forgiven, and we stand before God justified in Christ, "in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." Eph. 1, 7. All that is needful now on our part is that we repent and believe. "He that believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved." "Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee."

This comfort remains ours. The Savior who forgives sins is still among us, though we see Him not, and His power and mercy continue unto this day. His Word is

given us, that through it His power and mercy may be exercised among men until the end of time; and when now His gospel is preached, remission of sins is proclaimed to all who hear it, and all who believe possess the blessed gift. O soul, embrace forgiveness now, for now the Lord offers it to you.

III. When the forgiveness of sins is embraced by faith, the effects of its appropriation will follow. Our Lord says, "Be of good cheer," and connects that with the forgiveness. The multitude glorified God which had given such power to men. And where there is forgiveness of sin there is also life and salvation.

1. "Be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." When the soul becomes aware of its actual condition and knows its sin, it is troubled. It is in disharmony with God and dreads His displeasure. He will visit "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil." Rom. 2, 8. 9. We cannot view sin lightly or speak of it lightly, when we once become conscious of its enormity and of its misery. God works such knowledge in us that we may dread sin and hate it and flee from it. The psalmist expresses the condition of such a contrite heart when he says: "O Lord, rebuke me not in Thy wrath, neither chasten me in Thy hot displeasure. For Thine arrows stick fast in me, and Thy hand presseth me sore. There is no soundness in my flesh because of Thine anger, neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. For mine iniquities have gone over my head; as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me." Ps. 38, 1–4. But the gracious Lord who leads us to a knowledge of our wretched state, also applies the remedy. "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." Ps. 34, 18. The Savior calls, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matt. 11, 28. We

come to Him when we believe His precious promise and trust His gracious declaration, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." Then we have rest, for the curse is removed and the wrath of God is turned away. "Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. 5, 1. The troubled conscience is quieted by faith in the divine assurance that we shall not die, but live—that the wages of sin shall not be visited upon us, because they have been visited upon our Lord in our stead, and we have fled for refuge to the hope set before us in Him. In such faith the heart is of good cheer, because sin is forgiven and we have escaped its damnation.

Brethren, why are your souls not glad and jubilant all the day long and all the year round in the possession of such an unspeakable gift? Why are you sad and troubled as if you were going to the sinner's eternal doom instead of the saint's everlasting rest? Surely it is not because Jesus does not forgive sins or has not by His gospel offered forgiveness to you. The gospel is still the power of God unto salvation to all them that believe it, and this is the gospel which is preached unto you every Lord's day and applied every time the absolution is pronounced. Why then do your hearts not rejoice and does the peace of God not fill your souls? I will not say that it is because you do not believe. With some I fear that is the reason. Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith. But with some it is because, though they believe and have pardon, they do not give spiritual things enough attention to realize the blissful facts, and do not employ themselves enough about the gospel to acquire strength of faith, but permit their peace to be disturbed by the cares of this life and by the doubts which the sin remaining in us and the enemy prowling around us are sure to suggest. Converse more with God; read your Bible more; be more punctual in attendance at the house of God; give more earnest heed

to the preaching of the gospel; appreciate more highly the privilege of eating and drinking the Lord's body and blood, given and shed for the remission of sins. The peace which the forgiveness of sin brings will be realized the more your faith grows, and that can grow only by the use of the means of grace. Abide with Jesus; walk with Jesus always and everywhere, and His peace He will give unto you.

2. But then, like the multitude that saw the wonderful work of Jesus and marveled, you will glorify God who gave such power to man. His most marvelous work is the remission of your sin and your deliverance from its eternal doom of darkness and death. If you believe the forgiveness brought in the gospel and in the holy sacraments to you, how can you withhold from Him your thanksgiving and praises? If the power of divine grace has enabled you to trust in Jesus as your Savior, must it not also have enabled you to worship Him in the beauty of holiness and to confess Him before men in the assembly of the saints? The soul that rejoices in the great salvation will say with the psalmist: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies." Ps. 103, 1–4. And not only will such faith manifest itself in the worship of the Lord and the confession of Him and His Word in the great congregation, but it will utter itself also in the life. That too will glorify God and adorn the doctrine of the Savior. "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love." Gal. 5, 6. Not that the love which follows faith secures salvation. This Christ has already secured, and the faith which embraces Him has already embraced

it. The believer is saved by grace, not by anything that he can do; he has forgiveness through the faith which appropriates the gospel absolution, not through the works which follow that faith and forgiveness. But it belongs to the nature of true faith that it works by love. Where therefore the labor of love is wanting, the power of faith which moves to such labor is wanting. Therefore St. James warns us that "faith without works is dead." James 2, 20. God would have us do all manner of good works in the service of our neighbor for the glory of His name. Therefore be not weary in well-doing. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Eph. 2, 10. God made us for holiness in His service from the first, and what we could not render because of sin, He now enables us to render through the forgiveness of sin in our blessed Lord. "He died for us, that they which live should henceforth not live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again." 2 Cor. 5, 15. This end is attained when by faith we embrace the forgiveness of sins, "seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him." Col. 3, 9. 10. In Christ the restoration of man and the accomplishment of God's design in his creation, is effected. The believer is released from the bondage of sin and rendered a free child of God that delights to do his Father's will. Therefore "we beseech you brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more." 1 Thess. 4, 1. The more the thankful believer can do to honor his dear Savior's name, the happier he is. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain

in the Lord." 1 Cor. 15, 58. It blesses your neighbor, it increases your joy, and it glorifies Him who has forgiven your sins.

3. One thing more. The whole purpose of the Son of God's coming in the flesh was that the world through Him might be saved. That which is in the way of salvation is sin. When that is taken out of the way the original design of God, that man should enjoy His presence and blessedness for ever, can be attained. Where there is forgiveness of sin there is also life and salvation. He that believeth shall not perish, but have everlasting life. The pardoned sinner rejoices in the hope of glory, "giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son, in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins." Col. 1, 12–14. We live and labor and suffer here in the prospect of a blissful hereafter in the glorious mansions of our Father's house. The dreadful fact of sin does not discourage us when we believe in Jesus, for He forgives sin, and through Him we have an entrance ministered unto us abundantly into the kingdom of glory. "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." 2 Cor. 5, 1.

Dear brethren, these are glorious tidings that Jesus forgives sins—forgives sins now and here, and thus delivers us from death and the devil and gives everlasting salvation. You have heard them preached before. Have you ever realized their truth? O, do not neglect these things which belong to your peace. To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts. To-day receive His words and experience their blessedness, "Be of good cheer: thy sins be forgiven thee." Amen.

Twentieth Sunday after Trinity.

MATT. 22, 1–14.

And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: and the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden, were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him in outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.

Beloved Congregation:

As you have heard, the kingdom of God is like a king who made a marriage feast at the wedding of his son and invited many guests. But his invitation was scorned by a large number, and even among those who finally did come from the by-ways and cross-roads not all had put on the proper clothing which he had provided to grace the occasion. The parable teaches that there is a bridal between heaven and earth in the person of God's only begotten

Son, and that a precious spiritual feast is prepared to which mankind is invited. God sent out servants to call the Jews, who were His peculiar people in the old dispensation, and they would not come. He sent out other servants, when all was ready, and the Jews still refused to accept the invitation, some giving themselves wholly to their earthly avocations, and some even persecuting and killing the Lord's servants. Then, as those first called counted themselves unworthy of everlasting life, He turned to the Gentiles. A goodly number of guests were thus gotten together, but not all of them were in decent garb. There was one who had not on a wedding garment, and he was cast out into everlasting punishment. The obvious meaning is that the gospel call is rejected by a large proportion of those who hear it, and that even among those who do seem to accept it there are some who inwardly decline it. There are thus many invited, but few who really accept the invitation and enjoy the rich feast which God has prepared for their souls. This our text expresses in the closing words, "Many are called, but few are chosen." There is thus an election of grace. Do not shrink from the expression. The Bible teaches that there is a predestination to eternal life and an election to the inheritance of the saints in light. It tells the saints that God has "predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved." Eph. 1, 5. 6. It speaks of believers as the "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." 1 Pet. 1, 2. The Bible does not teach a predestination and election of some men to life and salvation, and of other men to death and damnation, without any reference to their relation to Christ by faith or unbelief. That is a Calvinistic figment, which

contradicts the whole tenor and teaching of the Gospel. But there is a divine election of grace. Our text shows us how it is, and it gives us the needful warning, that we may make our calling and election sure. Let us then devoutly, for our admonition and comfort consider the answer which our text gives to the question,

WHO ARE THE ELECT?

It teaches us that 1. *They are among the called;* but that 2. *Not all the called are elect;* and that 3. *Those are elect who have on the wedding garment of Christ's righteousness by faith.* May the Lord grant us such faith and preserve us in it, that we may not be rejected when He comes!

I. *The elect are among the called.* There are none in this number who have not been invited to the Gospel feast; but the invitation is designed to be given to all, as the feast is prepared for all; and whenever the call is given it is sincere and earnest, and it is designed to place those who hear it in the number of the elect.

1. The Lord has chosen none whom He has not called. That is plain on the face of it. No one will come to a great King's feast without an invitation, and no one has the right to extend an invitation but He who gives the feast. There may be called persons who will not come and partake of the royal dainties, but none can come and partake who are not called persons. Therefore we say in our Catechism that "the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith, even as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth." That He knows from eternity who, when the grace unto salvation is offered, will be led by that grace to believe in Jesus and persevere in faith unto the end, it is not necessary to

tell you. You have learned that He knoweth all things. Therefore St. Paul says that "He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." Eph. 1, 4. He knew before He made man what would become of him, and knew who by His grace would accept and who by his own sin would reject the offer of salvation in Christ. Therefore He knew the elect from eternity. In His eye they were therefore elect long before they were called. But they were so because the whole history of man was known to Him before the events were actually performed, and His election takes into account those events which He foreknew. He chose none who rejected Jesus; He chose all who should not reject His grace and salvation offered in Jesus.

Those of whom He foreknows that they will not reject it, are to be brought into the possession of the life and salvation prepared for them in Christ, and this can take place only if they come to Him. If they were not invited, they would not attain the faith which He foreknew. "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him, in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Rom. 10, 13–17. As only he who gives the feast has the authority to invite his guests, so too the great King alone who makes the marriage for His Son has the authority to call men to partake of His bounties. And He alone has the power to induce them to

come and to furnish the suitable garments for the royal feast. The Lord will not choose those whom He has not called at all, and such have not the qualifications to be chosen, even if the choice would otherwise fall on persons who are not invited. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called." Rom. 8, 28–30. While then God foreknows His people, and foreknew them from the foundation of the world, so that in His eye those who die in faith were elect before they were called—elect in His omniscience from eternity—for us, who can not foreknow, the chosen are always among the called. The elect are those who come to the marriage, not those who have no invitation.

2. But the invitation was designed for all men, and has in fact, in different ages, been extended to all men. It was given to the Jews, who were first bidden, and when these would not come, it was given to the Gentiles in the highways. Thus we read that when the Jews "spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming, then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold and said, It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." Acts 13, 45. 46. This was in accord with God's plan that all the ends of the earth should see the salvation of our God. So the commission was given to the disciples of Christ, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Mark 16, 15. The salvation in Christ is prepared for all men, and it is the will of God that all should hear the tid-

ings and come to the Savior. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live." Ezek. 33, 11. But how should the wicked man turn from his evil way and come to a Savior of whom he never heard and to whom he was never called? That all men might hear it, the gospel was commanded to be preached unto all nations, as it was announced at the birth of Jesus. "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." So the apostle declares that God our Savior "will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." 1 Tim. 2, 4–6. We would therefore be ungrateful to the gracious purpose of God as revealed in the gospel, and to the express command which He has given to His people, if we declined to labor for the spread of the good tidings among all nations. "Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage." How can you suffer millions to go down into everlasting death, when God has in mercy given you the means to save them? Least of all should we permit the thought that only few are chosen even when many are called, to cool our ardor in the missionary work. That is but a subterfuge of the flesh. Give the perishing souls a chance, and if only one of a thousand should hear and come to Jesus, that causes joy before the angels in heaven and should cause joy in your souls for ever. God wills that all men should be saved; the Savior died for all; the command is given to bear the precious tidings into all lands. Let the gracious will of the Lord be done, that all may hear the call to the feast that is spread for all!

3. Nor need we have any fears that the invitation is

not sincere and earnest when it comes to us, or is brought through us to others. There is no more horrible impeachment of God's holiness than that which lies in the heartless heresy spread by Calvinists concerning the insincerity of the divine call of grace. It is the dreadful outburst of the dreadful error of absolute predestination, and is in itself sufficient to excite in the devout soul a horror of that product of human speculation. If it were true that God desires only a portion of the human race to be saved from the misery into which sin has plunged it, and that He has pleasure in the death of the larger portion, whom He therefore has no will to save, it would be true also that when He sends men out into the highways to bid to the marriage as many as they shall find, the invitation could be seriously and sincerely meant only in the case of those whom He really wants at the feast, while in the case of those whom He has no will to bless it would be all sham. But it is false. When God calls you to life and blessedness, He is not trifling with you and mocking your misery by giving you an invitation in sound that is a rejection in sense. If that were the case, how could we trust Him in anything? "God is not man, that He should lie, neither the son of man, that He should repent. Hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" Num. 23, 19. He gives us the blessed comfort that His Word is sure as He is faithful, and that when He calls us to the blessings of grace and glory, He means it all. Only come. For thus saith the Lord: "Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you." Is. 55, 3. He that trusts in the Lord's invitation can never be deceived. Therefore come, then extend the invitation to others. You can make no mistake in the persons. He would have all men come to a knowledge of the truth and all men turn from their evil ways.

He would have all to be saved, and commands us to proclaim the great salvation in Christ to all men. Therefore be assured that His call is sincere, be the persons to whom you bring it what they may. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Rev. 22, 17. It is sincerely offered to all; let all take freely, for all are seriously and earnestly called.

II. *But not all the called are also chosen.* This is not because God did not desire that all should equally enjoy the blessings to which they are called and did not call them with equal sincerity and efficacy, but because, as our parable shows, many would not come. Our Lord's complaint against the holy city explains how it is: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." Matt. 23, 37. The Savior was willing to bless them, but they were not willing to be blessed. So in our text. Many were called, and called with the sincere purpose that they should sit at the feast and enjoy the sumptuous dainties of the king, but those that were bidden would not come, and those who did come from the highways were not all loyal to the bounteous Benefactor. The text leaves us no room for doubt as to the reasons why not all the called were chosen. Some treated the call lightly; some even persecuted the messengers who brought the call; some came outwardly, but inwardly rejected the invitation.

1. The king "sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding, and they would not come. Again he sent forth other servants, saying Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things

are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise." That is a sad account. The Lord calls condemned men to the pardon and peace and blessedness which He has provided, and which He alone can give, and they prefer their lands and their business to all the blessings He offers. It is marvelous. But it is the fact. Nor has mankind become wiser since then. It is the same story all along the line of history down to our own times, and is the same to-day. Do you not witness it still in your own congregation and your own surroundings? Are there not many even now who are so absorbed in their worldly affairs, so intent upon pushing their business and gathering their dollars, that they have no time and no taste for the concerns of their souls? They are called, and perhaps recognize the need of heeding the call, or even intend at some convenient season to comply with it; but they are too busy now. And the farm and the merchandise — must not that claim a diligent man's attention? Conscience is but too often quieted with the delusive thought that duties such as these justify the neglect of the great salvation. It is a delusive thought, because it is not a duty to attend to anything, not even the wants of father or mother or son or daughter, in preference to the one thing needful. Nor can father or mother or son or daughter even suffer by reason of our seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. The performance of this chief duty secures the proper performance of all the rest. It is therefore a mere attempt to cheat the soul when it is urged that the farm and the merchandise demand such attention as to justify the refusal to come to the feast when the Savior calls. And yet men have thus made light of the call in the past, and are making light of it now. Examine yourself, whether you are not one of this unwise and unhappy class. Are you sure that you

are not giving this world with its riches and its pleasures and its cares more earnest attention than the things which pertain to the eternal interests of your soul? Are you sure that you never let your business affairs interfere with your spiritual privileges and duties? If you are not, see that you turn from your ways and make your calling and election sure by giving more earnest heed to your Savior's voice. You cannot comfort yourselves that you are among the elect if, instead of heeding the call to come to the gospel feast, you go to your farm and your merchandise, as if these could deliver you from sin and supply your spiritual needs.

2. Some who will not come are bolder and array themselves in open hostility to the Lord and His call. "The remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them." Sin is the same in all human hearts. They are altogether corrupt. All are totally depraved, so that they are dead in trespasses and sins. In that respect there is no difference between those who, when they are called, go to their farm and their merchandise, and those who treat the servants spitefully. By nature all are against the Lord. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Rom. 8, 7. But the manifestations of that carnal mind are not the same in all. Some are externally genteel, and seek to appear reasonable and upright; others give the reins to their base passions and seem rude and rough. It is still the same to-day as it always was. When the call of grace is presented to an assembly, some of those who reject it will preserve a decent appearance, so that the only indication of their enmity is the fact that they will not come; others are not so careful to restrain the expression of their hostility, and direct their persecution against the preachers. They are not by nature worse than the others, but they are more vulgar in the utterance of their wickedness.

They will not come to Jesus that they may have life, and make no effort to conceal the enmity that is in their hearts against Him and His Church. Why such persons are not chosen is plain to all. They remain in their sin and obtain its wages. "When the king heard thereof he was wroth; and he sent forth his armies and destroyed those murderers, and burnt up their city." The reference evidently is to the destruction of Jerusalem, whose iniquities brought upon it such a dreadful doom. God often visits temporal punishments upon people who boldly revel in wickedness, that men who will not believe may see that "God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Gal. 6, 7. But whether it is seen in this world or not, the wages of sin is eternal death; and those who reject the call of our Lord, who alone can cleanse from sin and save from death, must eternally perish, whether their rejection has seemed to be due only to preoccupation with other important matters, or has appeared in its true character as bitter enmity to the Lord and His way of salvation. Such people are called, but how could they be chosen when they would not come?

3. But there is still another class mentioned in our text. Some do come apparently, and still are not chosen. I say apparently, because what seems obedience to the call by reason of external compliance, is not always really obedience. Coming to Jesus is a matter of the heart, and when that is not turned to Him, all coming to Him in outward form is only apparent and deceptive. It may deceive others; it may even deceive ourselves; but it never deceives God, who trieth the heart. How it is, our Lord describes in the parable. When those first called would not come, "Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the

highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good; and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment; and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." All sorts of people come to the church when the Gospel is preached, and although none are received into membership without the profession of faith in Jesus, the profession is not always sincere. We cannot see into the hearts of men, and when some bad people come among the good and outwardly witness the good confession, they too must be received. Because so far as we can see they belong to God's people. But the Lord is not deceived. He examines the heart, and He rejects those who in their hearts reject Him. It would be a vain thought if any of you supposed that your outward membership in the church makes your election sure. There you have the means of grace, and there you make confession of Christ before men, and this is necessary. But it is not all that is necessary. These means are given us that we may have faith in Christ unto salvation, and the confession is required that the faith which we have may be made known for the glory of God and for a witness to others, that they too may be induced to come. But where there is no faith, the means of grace effect no salvation and the confession profits us nothing. Let us take warning. The guests are all examined by the Lord, and only he that believeth shall be accepted; he that believeth not shall be damned. No unbeliever can be chosen, even though he outwardly heeds the call and presents himself at the feast to which

he and all men are invited. He has not a wedding garment, and is therefore cast into outer darkness.

It has become evident, my brethren, that the chosen are among the called, but also that not all the called are chosen. The question has thus still received no definite answer, Who are the elect? But it seems to me that in view of all this the answer is easy.

III. *The elect are those who have the wedding garment.* For those who would not come when called, and those who externally came and had not the wedding garment, are not chosen. Therefore those who appear at the feast in the requisite garment are the chosen few from among the many called. Let us in conclusion look more particularly at this point.

1. First of all we must ascertain what is to be understood by the wedding garment in our parable. It designates that which is essential for acceptance with God. The prophet says: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." Is. 61, 10. We are not ignorant of that salvation and of that righteousness. Christ is the Savior; His righteousness becomes ours; we are saved through faith. Thus St. Paul says: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, The just shall live by faith." Rom. 1, 16. 17. When we have Christ, we have His righteousness and the great salvation which He wrought, and we have Him with all His merits and gifts when we have faith. We are thus clothed in His righteousness. That is the wedding garment which is necessary for acceptance with God. "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For

as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Gal. 3, 26. 27. Baptism is the means of conveying to us Christ's robe of righteousness, and faith is the means of appropriating it. Those who believe have put on the wedding garment which the grace of God provides and offers. They that continue in this faith unto the end shall be saved. They are the elect.

2. For not having this wedding garment the rejected are responsible. It is their fault, not the Lord's that they are found without it. The thought is all wrong—it is blasphemous—that God has from eternity resolved that He, who alone can furnish the wedding garment, would give it only to a few, and would then condemn to everlasting misery the many for not having it. If there were any truth in such a doctrine, the man without a wedding garment would not have been speechless when asked how he came there without a decent dress. He would have replied that he came with the best he had, and the Master of the feast had not supplied him with a better. But he had no such excuse and no such justification. He was speechless because it was his fault that he was not robed in royal garments, like the rest. He came there with his ragged garment all bespattered with the mire of the world's highways, and he refused to put off his filthy rags and put on the white raiment of Christ's righteousness. The Lord offered him all that was needful, and he would not accept it, though when he rejected it the Lord gave him the power by which he might have accepted it. The fault was wholly his, and therefore his conscience smote him when he was called to account, and he was speechless. And so all are guilty now who are not among the chosen, though they have been called. What more could the Lord do for you? He has prepared the feast and called and offers the wedding garment freely. Why then do you not come, or coming, why do you appear without the wedding gar-

ment? Why will you choose death rather than life? "And he was speechless!"

3. Whilst those who foolishly neglect the things which belong to their peace, and decline the call to salvation, or only seemingly accept it, those who come to the feast in sincerity, clad by the King in the garments befitting the royal marriage, enjoy the blessings of grace and glory that surpass all imagination to picture and all language to describe. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." 1 Cor. 2, 9. It is no common earthly feast that is prepared. It is not even such a feast as the kings of this world spread for their noble guests, though many would think themselves highly honored if they were permitted to sit at such a table in such a company. But the Lord has nobler gifts for His guests than such as kings of earth are wont to give or able to offer. They are the gifts which our perishing souls need, and which only the Lord God, merciful and gracious, can bestow. He offers the wedding garment that fits us to sit down with angels forever in our Father's house. Few enjoy those blessings, but it is because the many will not come to Jesus that they might have life. But those who come and are arrayed in the garments of Christ's righteousness are happy for evermore, enjoying His blessings on earth and dwelling with Him in the unending bliss and glory of heaven. The elect of God are blessed for ever.

Ye are all called, ye who hear my voice to-day; for the gospel invitation is extended to you now: why will you not be among the chosen? Some of you trouble yourselves with thoughts about the election of God, because He foreknows it all. But there is no need for that. Do what He now asks you to do; and that which you do is the thing that He foreknows. Come; the feast is

prepared for you now. Come; the call is extended to you now. Come; The wedding garment is ready for you now. The Lord wants you to come and bids you welcome. The needful grace is offered you in the Word which calls you. There is no respect of persons with God: He wants you all to come and be forever blest. Hear the Word of invitation; heed the gracious call. And continue in these things. The same Lord that calls you supplies the needful grace for perseverance. Be thou faithful unto death and thou shalt receive the crown of life. Amen.

Twenty-First Sunday after Trinity.

JOHN 4, 46–54.

And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee, he went unto Him, and besought Him that He would come down and heal his son; for he was at the point of death. Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe. The nobleman saith unto Him, Sir, come down ere my child die. Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way: thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way. And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth. Then inquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house. This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when He was come out of Judea into Galilee.

Beloved in Christ Jesus:

Our Savior had returned from His first visit to Jerusalem during His public ministry, and came again to Cana, which had been honored with His first miracle. His fame had gone abroad, and a courtier in distress from Capernaum, a half day's journey away, came to Him for help. This man was not the centurion of whom we read in Matt. 8. and whose servant was sick of the palsy and was healed. The scene in our narrative is at Cana, not at Capernaum, the person sick is the nobleman's son, not the centurion's servant; the sickness is fever, not palsy. In both cases we find the manifestation of faith: but in the centurion, who was a Gentile, it is strong faith; in the nobleman, who was probably a Jew, it was a glimmering faith shown in its rise and growth. And it is this that forms the most

important feature of the narrative for our consideration. Let us then dwell to-day on the subject of

CHRISTIAN FAITH,

and learn 1. *Its Nature*, and 2. *Its Blessing*. Lord Jesus, give us grace to hear Thy word with reverent attention and to believe it unto eternal life.

I. *What is Christian Faith?* The question is by no means one of mere theoretical interest. Faith is spoken of so much in the Scriptures that we could not understand the meaning of their chief passages without knowing what that word means. But the principal point is that we cannot be children of God and heirs of heaven without faith. That makes it a question of intense practical interest, What is Christian faith? all the more so, because the word faith is used in so many relations and therefore with so many modifications of meaning. It behooves us to inquire into the nature of Christian faith, as distinguished from faith in general, and to find the specific mark on account of which it is called Christian.

1. There is a faith that has not the marks of the work of the Holy Ghost in the human soul designated by that name. It is purely a product of natural power, and is therefore not conditioned by regeneration, or by any supernatural influences resulting in regeneration. And such faith is not to be rejected as evil. On the contrary, it is necessary in all the walks of life, both for the individual and for society. To sneer at all faith, as some do in their hostility to the Christian requirement of faith, only manifests the stupidity of unbelief.

Faith is necessary as the groundwork of all knowledge in the individual. We can have assurance of nothing without trusting the witnesses upon whose testimony our knowledge rests. Even those who declaim against all faith as

superstition, and insist on the evidence of sense as the only rational basis of conviction, must trust the witness in order to be sure of the thing witnessed. You cannot know that there is a congregation assembled here to-day unless you trust your eyes and ears. You believe what you see with your own eyes and hear with your own ears, not because these things could not be otherwise, but because you accept the testimony of your senses which bear witness that they are not otherwise. We are so made that we believe the snow to be white and the sky to be blue because the one looks white and the other looks blue. We know it because we believe it: whoever does not believe his senses does not know it. All knowledge rests fundamentally on the validity and trustworthiness of the faculties by which we obtain it; if these are discredited, we have no assurance. Without faith we are certain of nothing.

So we are naturally constituted also that men have confidence in one another. The business of the world could not be carried on without it. Man has faith in his fellow man, and it is well that he has. It would be a wretched state of society if no one trusted his neighbor. The ground of such trust since the introduction of sin into the world is indeed precarious, but the trust continues, notwithstanding the frequent abuse of confidence and the manifold deceptions that are practiced. Men are often duped, and yet suspicion is no virtue. If the natural man is not honest, there are at least reasons why he should practice honesty as a policy, and it is reasonable and right that one should trust the other as long as there is no evidence to convict him of untrustworthiness. There is such faith in men, and all admit the necessity of it for social intercourse and traffic. All the assurance we have that not every man is a rascal is a belief in certain signs of rectitude, and he who will not believe has his misery for his

unbelief. Those who would renounce all faith must renounce all confidence in nature and in man, as well as in God and in grace.

But such confidence in nature and in man is natural, whilst any confidence in supernatural realities cannot rest on the natural evidences which give us assurance of natural things. That is urged by unbelievers as an objection. But it is precisely what we desire to point out and express. Christian faith does not rest on the evidence of sense, and is not a product of natural powers. Believing the testimony of sense, and accepting the natural signs of things not present to sense, does not make a Christian believer. All men do that, but not all men have faith as the Scriptures define and require faith. We have only been showing that even unbelievers admit the need of some kind of faith and practice it, though all the while they endeavor to ridicule all faith as superstition. That they have saving faith we have not said and could not say. But the kind of faith they have may help us all to understand the nature of Christian faith.

2. This rests on the Word of God alone, by the power of grace, without the evidence of sense or of any testimony derived from natural sources. Its objects are supernatural, and it is proper that its evidence should be supernatural. That God so loved the world as to purpose its salvation by the mission of His Son, that Jesus is God over all as well as man, that His blood cleanseth from all sin,—these are things that we cannot know from any natural sources, or by the exercise of any natural powers. No intensity of application to the study of nature, whether of the stars over our heads or the ground under our feet, could lead us to the knowledge of what God purposed to do for us through Christ and to work in us through the Holy Spirit. Nature knows nothing of Christ and Christianity, and our natural faculties can discover nothing of

them. They must be known by other means and certified by other testimony. "God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." 1 Cor. 2, 10. 11.

These are the things which Christian faith embraces and to which it clings. They are set before us in the Word by the Holy Spirit, and that Word is the ground upon which its assurance rests. "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Pet. 1, 21. Therefore the apostle admonishes Timothy: "Continue then in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." 2 Tim. 14–17. The Word of God sets the truth before us in all its fulness, and faith appropriates that truth.

And that faith is just as little a product of nature as nature is the source whence the truth is derived. The supernatural revelation can be embraced only by a supernatural power and gift. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. 2, 14. Man naturally believes his senses and the testimony of his neighbors, but he does not naturally believe the supernatural testimony which the Word of God presents concerning supernatural

things. They lie outside of his natural range and present no credentials to his natural faculties. They are received only when the Spirit of God gives us the power to receive them which we call faith, and which is bestowed through the Word whose testimony is to be received. Therefore faith is in one respect its own evidence, just as sense is its own evidence in its proper sphere. I know that you are present in this house of God, because I believe my eyes which see you here. I know that my Redeemer lives, because I trust the Word which declares this blissful truth. I could not know in either case if I did not have confidence in the means by which knowledge is in each of these cases legitimately obtained. A person who has no sight can see no organ up there in the gallery; a person who has no faith can see no Savior in the Gospel which I preach and in the sacraments which I administer. God must work the spiritual power of faith as He wrought the natural power of sight, and what faith sees is sure to the believer, as what the eye sees is sure to the natural man. The one is a confidence in the Word wrought by grace, the other is a confidence in the sight wrought by nature. When one has no eye, he sees nothing in the natural world; when one has no faith, he sees nothing in the spiritual world. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Heb. 11, 1. It is the basis of all assurance in spiritual things, as sense is the basis of all assurance in material things. We would not be sure of things that we see, if God had not by nature made us sure that the presentations in nature to sense are real; we would not be sure of things that we believe, if God had not by grace made us sure that the presentations in the Word to faith are real. We cannot by nature see spiritual things, but we can by grace believe them. "We walk by faith, not by sight." 2 Cor. 5, 7. Christian faith is the

power wrought in us by the Holy Ghost in virtue of which we are sure of those things which the Word of God sets before us.

3. The whole subject is illustrated by the narrative in our text. "There was a certain nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee, he went unto Him and besought Him that He would come down and heal his son; for he was at the point of death. Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe."

The trouble which had come upon the nobleman directed his attention to the reports which he had heard concerning Jesus of Nazareth and the mighty works which He had wrought. It was God leading him by His providence to the Help of the suffering. Sickness and sorrow, adversity and affliction are not means of grace. They do not bring relief. They are the manifestations rather of that wretchedness which renders help necessary. But just because they bring our need before the mind they are used in the government of God as preparatives for the blessing. They induce us to look for help. The nobleman would probably not have thought of Jesus if the affliction had not come. So God often uses adversities as incitements to think of the Helper, and that which seems to us an evil proves to be eventually a blessing. Many a man is led by his afflictions to think of Jesus and is thus brought to believe in Him. Not that the affliction works faith. It is a natural thing, and its product cannot rise above nature; but it prompts us to look for help wherever help may be found, and if we have heard of the great Helper it may lead us to look for help in that direction, though the heart do not yet cling to Him in faith.

The nobleman had heard of Jesus, and was moved by his sorrow to seek His help. That which he had heard

was certainly not rejected with scorn. It was working in his soul, and although we can hardly say that at this stage he had Christian faith that embraced forgiveness of sins in the Lamb of God, he was on the way to attain it. God was drawing him to His Son. Therefore he was not discouraged when the Lord said, "Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe." The words implied a rebuke. They reproached him with wanting the evidence of sense instead of trusting the Lord's mercy and power. The words indicated that the nobleman would believe only what he saw, and that his faith had not yet risen above the level of nature. This is apparent also in his entreaty that the Lord would come down and heal his son, as if the power of Christ were not sufficient to heal him without coming down to Capernaum. But God was drawing him, and he was not against Jesus. Therefore he persisted, notwithstanding the implied censure. "The nobleman saith unto Him, Sir, come down ere my child dies." The implication still is that if He do not come down He cannot afford help. And now his words imply another thought which indicates his lack of spiritual understanding. Evidently they imply that if the Lord do not come down before the death of his child, help will be impossible. He had not yet that faith which trusts all to the Lord, though he was not far from the kingdom of God.

The nobleman was willing to hear and learn, and the Lord was merciful and ready to help. "Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth." That was not what he had wanted. He had asked the Lord to come down and heal his son. After the Lord had spoken about not believing unless signs and wonders were seen, he repeated the entreaty, "Come down ere my child die." But he was sincere in his entreaty, and instead of rejecting Christ when He declined to grant his petition in the form which he desired, he accepted the word. The power of Jesus

had wrought in his soul as well as on the body of his son at Capernaum, and the faith which clings to the Word was created; for the record continues, "And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way." He no longer thought it necessary that the Lord should visit his son, and no longer desired to see in order to believe. The word of the Lord was now sufficient. So strong was his assurance that he did not even hasten home to find confirmation of the word. He might have reached Capernaum the same night, but it was on the following day that his servants met him on the way and told him that his son was healed. "And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth. Then inquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. So the father knew that it was the same hour in which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house." He was now strengthened in his faith, and as a disciple of Jesus he confessed his Redeemer and taught his household to follow Him. That is Christian faith.

II. Such faith receives the divine blessing. It is a power which God gives to the soul to embrace the contents of the Word to which it clings, and as Christ is brought to us in the Word, that which is especially embraced is Christ the Savior. To this let us, in the second place, direct our thoughts.

1. The Word of God contains the blessings of which it speaks, and he who believes that Word has these blessings. When Jesus said to the nobleman, "Go thy way; thy son liveth," "the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way." That which he believed was not some fancy of his own, and his faith was not a supposition that such a fancy would be realized,

however groundless the supposition might seem to his own soul. Such whims are not faith, and it is no wonder that they inherit no blessing. It would be marvelous if they did. There are indeed deluded men in Christian communities who allege that it makes no difference what a person believes so long as he is sincere in his belief. It is pitiful that Christianity is thus put on a level with human superstitions and that its firm foundation in the unfailing promises of God are ignorantly, if not maliciously, undermined. Ye have not so learned Christ, my brethren. The nobleman "believed the word that Jesus had spoken to him." Faith and the Word belong together. The testimony of God is sure, and faith trusts it. Therefore it is never disappointed. What the Lord promises will surely come to pass, and faith knows it, has confidence in it, and is blessed in its believing reception of the promised gift, even before its possession has been realized in experience. The nobleman's son lived when the word was spoken, and in the believing reception of that word he had what he asked, before the servants told him that the fact corresponded to the word. His son lived because the word was spoken, and he had the assurance that his son lived because he believed the word. If he had not believed, he would have gone away with a heavy heart, and the blessing of faith would not have been his. There is no way of appropriating the blessing which the Lord's words contain and convey except by faith, and there is no exercise of faith in the word of the Lord that does not obtain the blessing.

It is true, when the Lord had spoken the word, the son lived, and the fact would have remained the same, whether the nobleman believed the word or not; for the word in this case pertained to an object in the material world, and what it declared could therefore take place without spiritual appropriation. But aside from the ques-

tion whether our Lord would have spoken the word and exerted the power if the nobleman had frustrated the divine work that was going on in his soul, it is beyond controversy that the blessing which faith obtained would not have been in his possession if he had not believed. His son would have lived, indeed; and after his arrival at his home in Capernaum he could, through the proofs before his eyes, have been convinced that the healing was effected, and could thus have experienced the joy which is natural to a father's heart on witnessing his son's deliverance from death. But the assurance and joy and gratitude of faith, and all that is associated with it of peace and hope, would have been wanting. The spiritual blessing in the word of the Lord only faith can appropriate and possess, and that blessing is great even when the word pertains to earthly things. It is always the spiritual that faith apprehends, and that is included in the word and conveyed in it even when the promise refers to our daily bread. The mercy of our God is revealed in it, and the soul is blessed in believing it. But the word is given us that we may know and believe that mercy unto our salvation, and faith lays hold of what the word says, and rejoices in the hope of glory. The blessings of faith are unspeakably great, embracing the assurances of a Father's protection and guidance through life, victory over death, and a crown of glory beyond.

The nobleman was permitted to see the realization of the word which he had embraced in faith. His son was alive and well, according to the word which Jesus had spoken. But not always is that blessing associated with faith. It is not sight, and does not rest on the evidence of sight. The word is always fulfilled. What it says always comes to pass, and faith has assurance that it is as the word declares, whether we can see it to be so or not. We possess the contents of the word when we believe it,

and the believer is content with such possession, and does not claim the confirmation of experience to give it assurance. When we believe that God will give us our daily bread so far as we can see the fact of such gift, we have natural belief on natural evidence, but not the Christian faith which believes the word of promise and which clings to that word even when the believer sees no bread and no natural means of procuring it; and where there is no Christian faith there is no right to expect the blessing of peace and content which it brings. Verily those who trust in the Lord shall be fed, but the believer does not ask to be fed first before he will believe the word that is meant to assure him of God's tender care, whether he sees or does not see its exercise.

2. But the whole subject becomes clearest when we keep in mind the great purpose of the revelation given us in Holy Scripture and of the faith which embraces that revelation. These things "are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through His name." John 20, 31. The word is given us that Christ the Savior might be set before our souls with all His righteousness and salvation, and that faith might be wrought in us to embrace what is thus set before us and to make it ours. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." Eph. 2, 8. When the Word of the Gospel is spoken to us it therefore brings the greatest of all blessings, even the mighty Savior with His great salvation from sin and death. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." Rom. 1, 16. 17. The Gospel conveys to us the gift of salvation, and exerts the power

that enables us to believe it and thus receive it. It is in the word, and he that believes what the word says has the boon. "By grace are ye saved through faith." That is faith's unspeakable blessing.

And this faith has the blessing whether other evidences than the mere assurance which it has through the word are added or not. "Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. 5, 1. The believer tastes that the Lord is gracious, and his daily experience through the power of his faith will be in harmony with his precious possessions. But the gift of grace and salvation is ours through the faith, not through its fruits in our inward experience or outward life. When I believe I have forgiveness of sins, I know that I have it, whether I am as happy as a child of God and an heir of heaven ought to be or not: and it is mischievous to make the certainty of God's Word in any way dependent on our feelings or consciousness of results. When God says, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," as He does by His Gospel here and now, it is reversing the divine order to say that if we feel the peace which such a fact produces we will believe that it is so as the word declares. How can you have the blessing of experienced peace so long as you do not by faith appropriate the gift on which the experience must depend? "Being justified by faith we have peace with God." But if we have not faith, we can have no experience of that which results from it. Believe the forgiveness and you have it: the effects of such faith in your heart and life will all follow in due time; but you have it whether they follow sooner or later, or in higher or lower degrees, or even at times seem not to follow at all. The word is true, and faith cleaves to it and has the blessing. Some are favored with an intense feeling of peace and joy, and some are harassed by depressing thoughts and gloomy fears; but faith has the

blessing, be all the rest as it may. It adheres to the word, and that is true under all circumstances and amid all experiences. The blessing is ours by faith, not by anything that follows it; and whether our faith be strong or weak, if it only holds fast the word, it has the gift which that word brings and which faith appropriates. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." John 20, 29.

Hearken to the word of the Lord, dear brethren. Faith comes by hearing, and by that it grows and gains strength. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, that your faith may increase and abound more and more. In such faith beseech the Lord for help in all your calling and conversation. But especially see that by it ye lay hold on eternal life, as that life is in the Son of God who came into the world to save. Embrace Him as He comes to you in the blessed Gospel and in the holy sacrament, and inherit the great blessing of life and glory which He came to secure and which He sets before you in the word which He has spoken. And speak to others the unsearchable riches of Christ. Of the believing nobleman it is said that "himself believed and all his house." Lead your household also to Jesus. Let Him dwell among you and bless you day by day until the end. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Amen.

Twenty-Second Sunday after Trinity.

MATT. 18, 23–35.

Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought to him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshiped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow servants, which owed him a hundred pence; and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellow servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

Dear Brethren:

Sin is the transgression of God's law. Nothing can be sin that does not violate His will. All sin is therefore primarily against Him. But He is Lord of all, and has made requirements of us with respect to one another as well as with respect to Himself; that is, we have duties towards our neighbors as well as duties towards God. Therefore we may sin against each other at the same time that we sin against Him who laid the obligation upon us

with respect to each other. Now God is merciful, and has devised and executed a way by which He can and does forgive sin. In that regard also He requires us to be submissive to His good will, and to forgive each other as He forgives us. That is what our text to-day teaches. It sets the lesson before us in the parable of

THE WICKED SERVANT,

and shows us how that wicked servant 1. *Was forgiven*, but 2. *Would not forgive*, and 3. *Was accordingly condemned.* May God give us grace to learn and do His will, that we may escape the wicked servant's final doom.

I. *He was forgiven.* He was not found guiltless, but he was pardoned. The mercy of God was great towards him as it is great towards all men.

1. "Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made." The day of reckoning came for the wicked servant, his wickedness was brought to light, and the sentence due to the enormity of his guilt was pronounced against him.

Wickedness is sometimes permitted to run a long career of apparent prosperity, and unrighteousness seems to triumph. But God is just: "vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." Rom. 12, 19. The King takes account of His servants. And the announcement is all the more terrible to sinners, because the King in the kingdom of heaven sees men's hearts and knows their secret thoughts and motives, as well as the words which they utter and the deeds which they perform. Foolish mortals

will often go on in sin, because day after day passes, and they are not called to account, and because when the thought of a possible reckoning does occur, they flatter themselves that their wicked dealing will not be found out. Has it not even occurred to some of you, my hearers, that because you have escaped so long you may escape for ever, and that because men have not found you out, the eye of the King has also failed to detect your secret sin? It is a vain thought, wherewith the devil is befooling you. Be not deceived: the King will take account of His servants. This will certainly take place at the judgment day. But our parable does not refer especially to that. It refers rather to a time when there may be deliverance from the condemnation which our sin has merited. God is merciful, and by His Word calls us to account before it is too late to escape from the wrath to come. When God tells you of your sin and warns you of its consequences, He is reckoning with you. He is calling you to account now, as through this parable He tells you how it is. Do not turn away: you cannot escape; if you refuse to hear Him now, He may have patience with you a while longer, but the reckoning must come. If your accounts are left unsettled in time, there will be a dreadful settlement in eternity. O do not postpone it until it is too late—for ever too late!

When He began to reckon one was brought unto Him who owed ten thousand talents. Only one? Is there really only one who is such a debtor to the great King? The text does not say that. One is mentioned by way of example. Our Lord means that each one should think of himself, and not of a multitude in which the individual might be overlooked. So He speaks of one who at the feast had not a wedding garment. Am I that one? That is the question that is suggested. There are millions in the same condemnation, but each is dealt with individually.

The one that owes is the one that is meant. Think of your debt; the other is to think of his. With you He begins to reckon.

Ten thousand talents is the amount which the wicked servant owes. It is an immense sum, making millions of our money. That is designed to show the immensity of the sinner's debt. It is beyond all possibilities of payment, even if the servant were rich. But he is pitifully poor. He had not to pay; that is, the claim was enormous, and the servant had nothing wherewith to meet it. How could anything else follow but that the law should be executed, and that the debtor with his wife and children should be sold, that the debt might be paid? Our Lord shows us by the parable how enormous is our debt to Him, how great is our poverty and inability to pay, and how justice requires the law to be executed. And what must follow? The sinner is condemned to bondage until he pays the debt; and as the amount is great and he has nothing wherewith to pay, his bondage must continue for ever, because it must continue until the debt is paid. O brethren, it is a terrible thing to fall under the just condemnation of the law; and if there is any way of escape from its dreadful doom, he must be a fool indeed who will not run for life that he may escape. But is there a way? Let us hear what our Lord says further in the parable.

2. "The servant therefore fell down and worshiped Him, saying, Lord have patience with me and I will pay thee all. Then the Lord of that servant was moved with compassion and loosed him and forgave him the debt." That is cheering beyond expression. That is the good news of the gospel as against the dreadful denunciations of a law that is terrible because it is righteous.

The wicked servant is not in all respects an example to us even when he cries for mercy. He feels the burden of his debt, and would fain escape its fearful consequences.

In that respect he is unquestionably sincere. And in that respect he is the type of many a sinner who has come to know the fearful consequences of his sin and would be glad to escape them. Not so much the sin, with its heinousness and enormity as a rebellion against the Lord of all, as the terrible torments that are its wages and that must inevitably follow, cause the alarm and prompt to the cry for mercy. This is seen in the wicked servant's plea for patience on the ground that he would pay it all. How could he pay all that enormous debt when he had nothing wherewith to pay, and all that he was able to earn was due to his master at any rate, even if he were not otherwise in his debt? He knew neither the enormity of his sin nor the magnitude of the mercy to which he was appealing for patience. How different his case from that of the poor publican, who asked only for mercy upon the helpless sinner! This wicked servant, while he petitions for mercy, makes promises that he knows himself unable to perform.

But still the Lord has compassion and looses him and forgives the debt. There was nothing in the servant but sin and misery, and it would therefore be absurd to think of any merit. He had not wherewith to pay and deserved punishment, and the king pities him and forgives him. So it is in the kingdom of God. The sinner has merited condemnation, and the law condemns him. But when in his conscience the King begins to reckon with him and he sees the enormity of his trespasses and hears the just sentence pronounced by the law against him, he is not without all means of escape. So far as his own resources and abilities are concerned, he certainly is. He has nothing wherewith to pay his debt. There is no merit to which he could appeal; he has only demerit. That is the reason he is condemned. But God has provided a way of escape. He has sent His Son to bear our sins and suffer for them upon the cross. Thus satisfaction is rendered to the demands

of justice, and on that ground the Judge can acquit the criminal. The appeal must therefore be made to His mercy and to the merit of Him who offered His life as a ransom for our sins. And when such appeal is made, it is never in vain. The heart's condition may be such that the granted forgiveness is not appropriated and that thus its precious benefits are not realized in the life. This was the case with the wicked servant in the parable. He was punished at last. But the fault is not in the Lord's mercy. His compassions are sure. On that mercy we should rely. All thought of paying our debt should be banished as false, and as doubly hateful because they detract from the merit of our dear Lord, who paid all our debt. Cast yourselves wholly upon the mercy in Christ, and He will forgive you all. But when that forgiveness is accepted and the conscience has peace in believing, the forgiveness of others must follow. That was not the case with the wicked servant in our text.

II. *He would not forgive.* He too had a debtor whom he called to account, and he too was appealed to for mercy, but the mercy he had received did not move him to compassion on his fellow servant, and he would not forgive the small debt, but insisted on justice in payment and punishment.

1. "But the same servant went out and found one of his fellow servants, which owed him an hundred pence; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest." The sum which was due him was but a trifle compared with the enormous sum which the wicked servant owed his lord. The purpose is to teach us how insignificant are the trespasses committed against us in comparison with the magnitude of our sins against God. And yet in our vain conceit of ourselves we are prone to regard the little offenses against the supposed majesty of our person to be enormous crimes, while the

heinous sins against the Majesty of heaven are treated as trifles. The wicked servant, fresh from the court of mercy that had pardoned his overwhelming debt, goes to his fellow servant that owes but a pittance and makes harsh demands; nay, he goes beyond the requirements of justice, laying hands on him and taking him by the throat before there is time to settle the account. It is a picture of the rough dealing which sinful man inflicts on sinful man, though all are in the same condemnation. Shall we say that it is an example of the roughness and heartlessness with which professing Christians, who talk of the mercy of God in remitting their sins, sometimes treat their fellow men? Let it at least not be said of any of us. If we have claims upon others, as certainly man can have claims upon his fellow man, the mercy which we receive should lead us to present them in meekness and kindness. But the wicked servant shows his wickedness in his harsh presentation of even a just claim. His conduct prepares us for the next scene.

2. "His fellow servant fell down at his feet and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not; but went and cast him into prison till he should pay the debt." Everything is presented here that a well-disposed mind could ask as a condition of forgiveness. The debt is not denied. There is no attempt at justifying or excusing it. There is no unwillingness to pay it. There is sorrow that it has been contracted and that immediate payment can not be made. The fellow servant humbly acknowledges all and cries for mercy. He entreats his creditor to have patience with him and promises to pay all. And that is not, as in the case of the wicked servant, an impossibility. The few pennies that he owes could be paid, if only time were granted. There is therefore everything in the case that would suggest leniency and forgiveness. But the cruel

tyrant would listen to nothing, but insisted on the execution of the law in its utmost severity, and the poor fellow servant is cast into prison. Is it not shameful!

Not in this did the shamefulness lie, that the servant accused his fellow-servant wrongfully. In both cases there was a real debt. Certainly it would be shameful if one condemned another upon a mere suspicion, born of uncharitableness, that a wrong had been done, much more if cruel treatment were associated with the unjust charge. Such shameful things may take place among sinful men, and even among Christians Satan succeeds at times in bringing them about. Has it not occurred in our community that men were condemned before they were heard, and treated as guilty when no proof could be furnished of their guilt? It is easy to suspect sinners of sin, but it is a crying wrong to charge brethren before others of wrong-doing, and thus to injure their good name, when there is no evidence to sustain the charge. The servants in our text were guilty and they could not and did not deny it. This Christians must learn, that forgiveness implies guilt in the person to be forgiven. Nor did the shamefulness of the servant's conduct consist in taking account at all of a debt so insignificant. No sin is so small that it can be regarded as unworthy of notice. Sin is damnable, and those who know its deadly character will never consent to treat it lightly, though the offence may seem comparatively small. The shamefulness of the servant's conduct lay in his implacable unmercifulness that would not forgive.

I do not say that in our relations to our fellow men on earth forgiveness of wrongs is always demanded. The parable does not so teach. Christianity does not set aside the authorities which God has placed over men with the power to compel obedience and punish wrong-doing. It does not require father and mother to spoil the child by

sparing the rod when righteousness requires them to use it. The petition for pardon is easily presented, and children could not be trained up in the way they should go, if punishment were remitted whenever they ask it. Neither can the civil government pay regard to the criminal's cry for mercy. Rulers are appointed to execute justice. "If thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is a minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." Rom. 13, 4. The robber, the adulterer, the murderer, must not, when he is called to account and convicted before the legal tribunal, be permitted, upon professions of penitence and beseechings for pardon, to go free, and run at large to the great danger of the community. In God's provision for external order in society by the ordinance of government in family and state the law of kindness and mercy and forgiveness does not apply. The end of government can be attained only by the administration of justice. They are not equals who are dealing with each other when rulers call offenders to account, but divinely appointed superiors, who must maintain their authority and insist on obedience to the law, which they are bound to execute, not to slight by ill-advised manifestations of mercy. Our parable is not speaking of such external arrangements for the government of men in their temporal relations. It is the kingdom of heaven that is likened unto the king who would take account of his servants. The fellow servants are contemplated as citizens of that heavenly kingdom, and in their relations as such they are taught to have mercy and forgive as God had mercy on them and forgave them. And when they treat each other harshly instead, as did the wicked servant his fellow servant in the text, it is shameful.

Nor does the parable teach that it should be all the same to us whether our fellow servants discharge their

obligations to us or not, and that our relations to them and our conduct towards them must be the same, whether they do right or wrong. The gospel does not abolish the law, and the wrong-doer cannot be treated as if his wrong were all right. There must be a reckoning between man and man when one commits an offense against another. If one has stolen my property or my good name, he must be called to account; and if he will not acknowledge his fault and by penitence put it away, he must be put away from the brethren and justice must be demanded. We cannot retain in the church convicted evil-doers who will not repent of their evil deeds. "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person," is the command which the Holy Spirit gives. 1 Cor. 5, 13. But if one who commits such an offense is led to see the wrong that he has done, and, like the fellow servant in our text, humbly acknowledges his fault and asks for mercy, the mercy which is shown to us must move us to show mercy to him. Impenitent persons remain under the condemnation of divine law, and we cannot pardon those whom the Lord does not pardon, but condemns. Penitent persons, on the other hand, receive pardon of the Lord, and we have no right to withhold it when they cry to us for mercy. And when we have sincerely embraced the forgiveness granted to us, we will not withhold it. The wicked servant showed by the cruelty of his conduct towards his fellow servant, that he had not realized the mercy shown to him, and his fate is a warning to us all.

III. *He was condemned.* Accusations were brought against him which led to a new reckoning, his sin was exposed, and he was condemned at last, though the mercy of the king had offered him forgiveness.

1. "So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done." The conduct of the wicked servant was such

as to arouse the indignation of the other servants who saw the cruel proceedings. They were grieved at the heartlessness manifested. In their sorrow and indignation they could not keep silence. They went and told it to the lord—told him all that they had seen and all that had saddened them. And so, if the angels, who are "ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation," (Heb. 1, 14) do not bear to heaven the report of wrongs and outrages committed upon the saints of God, as it is likely they do, certainly the brethren on earth cry to the Lord in behalf of their fellow servants, and tell Him all that is done to weary them and burden them and crush them. And nothing that can befall the people more enlists the sympathies of their brethren than the cruelty and inhumanity practiced towards them by those who profess also to be fellow Christians and prate about having their own sins washed away by the blood of the lamb. Those who will not forgive the penitent, crying for mercy, are accused before God by all who have compassion as the Lord has had compassion on them, and their appeal is not made to that Lord in vain.

2. "Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me; shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?" He was again called to account. Forgiveness had been granted, but the final reckoning had not been held. There is an earnest lesson in this for us. The fact that, when at any special time in our lives, our guilt has burdened our consciences and we have gone weary and heavy laden to our Lord, we have found rest for our souls in His abounding grace, does not render it certain for all time that we shall escape the condemnation due to our sins. Even when our repentance has been sincere and we have by faith laid hold of the hope set before us

in Jesus, we may fall from our high estate and again wallow in the mire of sin. Let men beware lest they become carnally secure in the thought that the pardon granted them prevents all future danger. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." 1 Cor. 10, 12. The mercy of the Lord does indeed endure for ever, and the satisfaction rendered by our Lord is for all sin in all time. "By His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." Heb. 9, 12. But this is ours by faith only, and if faith fails, the whole treasure is lost and our sins are again imputed. And those who will not obey the motions of the Spirit prompting to forgiveness, will, if this is persisted in, eventually drive that Spirit from their souls, and faith with all the benefits which it embraces, will then depart. Therefore see that ye resist not the Spirit, for only "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Rom. 8, 14. If ye turn away from Him who has pardoned you, and in pursuance of the flesh deal cruelly with your fellow-men, refusing to have mercy and to forgive, the reckoning will surely come.

3. The wicked servant is reasoned with, and his heinous offence is laid upon his conscience. His lord had been merciful to him and had forgiven him all his debt, and now he addresses to him the searching words, "Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?" What could he answer to such a question? Must not his own conscience utterly condemn him? He could not claim that he did not know his duty, or that in his inconsiderateness he did not realize the heartlessness of his conduct. He had just experienced the misery of debt and of his inability to pay it when called to account; he had just escaped the dreadful penalty that was due to his guilt and had experienced the relief afforded by his lord's mercy

granting him forgiveness: and now with all this experience fresh in his mind, he plays the tyrant towards his fellow servant who cries to him for mercy. Is it any wonder that the lord exclaims, "O thou wicked servant!" and that the wicked servant has not a word to say in excuse of his truculent course? And do not your consciences too smite you when you think of the mercies you have received and of the cold contention for justice which so often characterizes your action in reference to offending brethren? Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant as God for Christ's sake has had pity on thee? It is time yet to repent and cry again for mercy, and bring forth better fruits. If that is neglected, the final account will be as in our parable.

4. "And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors till he should pay all that was due unto him." That was the outcome of the wickedness. When mercy is despised, justice takes its course and the unjust is doomed to punishment. "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fall, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." Rom. 11, 22. The wrath of God is upon all them that renounce His offers of grace and go on in their wickedness. And from the doom to which the wicked are consigned there is no escape. They are delivered to the tormentors until the debt is paid. That shows us why in the nature of things the torments of hell are endless. The culprit must pay or suffer the penalty. He cannot pay. In hell he never can pay. The debt stands against him forever, and therefore the penalty must be suffered forever. And the judgment is just. The fellow servants are sorry at the wickedness done, and the lord is wroth when it is reported to him. Do we not in our inmost hearts accord with the servants and the lord and the sentence? It is just, and your consciences approve it. Therefore take to heart the words

with which our Lord closes the parable: "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." O Lord, merciful and gracious, give us grace heartily to embrace Thy forgiveness that we may as heartily forgive them that trespass against us! Amen.

Twenty-Third Sunday after Trinity.

MATT. 22, 15–22.

Then went the Pharisees, and took council how they might entangle Him in His talk. And they sent out unto Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that Thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest Thou for any man: for Thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us, therefore, what thinkest Thou! Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto Him a penny. And He saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto Him, Cæsar's. Then saith He unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's: and unto God the things that are God's. When they heard these words, they marveled, and left Him, and went their way.

Beloved in Christ:

The Gospel for the day again exposes the wily malice of the Pharisees in their hostility to our blessed Savior. They took counsel how they might entangle Him in His talk, and their plans were well laid to lead Him into difficulties. That hypocrisy was necessary to compass their purpose did not trouble them. They were used to that. So they sent a deputation to Him who should entice Him with flattering words and induce Him to answer a question which would prove His ruin. That was their foolish thought. They put the question whether it is lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not. If He should say Yes, they counted upon the opposition which this would arouse among the Jews, who regarded it as disloyal to their national rights and hopes to sanction subjugation of the chosen people to a foreign power. If He should say No,

they counted with equal assurance upon His arrest as a traitor to the Roman government which ruled in the land. But, as on some other occasions, He led them to answer their own question, and thus their counsel came to nought. Our Lord, however, as was His custom, gave instructions on the occasion that are valuable for all time. These we shall endeavor to set forth for our learning to-day, that we may the better understand and practice our duties toward the civil government. Let us then consider

THE CHRISTIAN CITIZEN.

It is a subject in regard to which there is some confusion in men's minds now as there was in the days of the Pharisees and Herodians. The citizen's duty as a subject under the civil authorities seems at some points to conflict with his duty as a subject under the great King in the Church. Evidently the men who took counsel against Jesus did not see clearly in this respect. They thought that His answer to the question about paying tribute to the civil ruler would array Him in opposition either to God or to the emperor. But they used flattering words with a view of inducing Him to remain uninfluenced by such considerations. They said: "Master we know that Thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest Thou for any man; for Thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us therefore, What thinkest Thou? Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Show me the tribute money. And they brought unto Him a penny. And He saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto Him, Cæsar's. Then saith He unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsars, and unto God the things that are God's." In that the Christian citizen is portrayed. 1. *He*

renders unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsars, but 2. *He renders unto God the things which are God's*. Let us humbly learn and zealously practice what our Lord and Savior teaches.

I. *Render to Cæsar what is Cæsar's.* That means that the civil government has rightful claims upon us, that we must be subject to the rulers under whom we live, but that this must not interfere with the paramount duty which we owe to God.

1. Governments are instituted of God for the protection of citizens in their rights, and all who are faithful to God are therefore faithful to the government. A good Christian is as such always a loyal citizen. He would not be true to God without being true to the ordinances of God, including as well those which pertain to his welfare on earth as those which pertain to his blessedness beyond this earthly life. The Christian recognizes the divine institution of civil government, and it is with him a matter of conscience to obey the laws and perform the duties which they enjoin. "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers," says St. Paul. "For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive unto themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same; for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For this cause pay ye tribute also; for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing." Rom. 13, 1–6. The

Holy Spirit has thus given us clear and explicit instruction on this subject. Those people are right who claim equal authority for all men in virtue of their equality as men; and yet all are entirely wrong who draw the inference that anarchy or socialism are the only state of society in which human rights are fully maintained and exercised. That might be true if there were no God that governs all, although in that case there would be no anarchists and socialists, nor anything else, because there would be no heaven and no earth. All men are inherently equal as members of the same race. But God is above all. And He has created man for His purposes, and has a right to rule according to His own good will. All men and things are subject to Him. The Lord God omnipotent reigneth. And He has ordained that some should rule and some should be ruled. In His wisdom He has made provision for governments that should bear the sword and enforce right in His name. The rulers are His ministers. In themselves they are no more than other people, and have no right to claim superiority, as if they were made of better mold than common mortals or had better blood than Adam's coursing in their veins. But they are appointed of God to execute righteousness among men in His behalf, and are responsible to Him for the rightful performance of their trusts. They are His servants to do His will in these offices, as others are His servants to do His will in other vocations. And they are appointed for our good. Since sin has entered into the world, this would be a dreadful place to live, if every man were permitted to do as he pleases. Neither house nor home, wife nor life would be safe, if there were no strong arm of the law to protect us. Therefore we should be thankful to God that in His goodness as well as in His wisdom He has instituted civil government for our protection, that we may pursue our vocations without being molested by wicked men who,

if they are not afraid of the judgment day, are at least afraid of the penitentiary and the gallows. We should be thankful that God has ordained powers to rule in the State, and should gladly discharge the obligations which He has laid upon us in this regard. They are the ministers of God to us for good, and the Christian citizen recognizes this.

2. In such recognition he is subject to the power that is placed over him, and cheerfully obeys the laws of the land in which he is called to live. What the form of the government may be is to him not essential. He may have his preferences in that respect, and these preferences may be so strong as to determine his choice of a residence, so far as this is a matter of choice in his circumstances. If he is at liberty to do so, he may decide to leave the land of his birth and the home of his childhood and take up his abode in a foreign country rather than live under laws that seem to him oppressive or be subject to a ruler whose tyranny is intolerable. He may seek to remedy existing evils by such advocacy of changes as does not conflict with established law. What he can do to secure justice among men he will not only regard it as his privilege to do, but also as his duty. As a Christian he loves righteousness, and will labor to maintain it and promote it. But to this end he will, as a citizen, first of all be subject to the government under which divine providence has placed him. When the hypocritical Pharisees sought to entangle our Lord in His talk by asking whether it is lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not, "Jesus perceived their wickedness and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Show me the tribute money. And they brought unto Him a penny. And He saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto Him, Cæsar's. Then saith He unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's." They could not deny the fact that they were under the Roman emperor's

dominion. The money in use among them bore his impress and signature. Whether they liked it or disliked it, they were his subjects, and the fact involved the duty. Though they did not well understand the matter, that much was clear to them. With all their prejudice against Jesus and all their eagerness to entangle Him and cavil at His teaching, they could not gainsay the inference that the tribute was due to the government under which they lived. They had nothing to say. "When they had heard these words, they marveled and left Him and went their way." And surely the matter must be clear to us, considering all the instruction that God has graciously given us respecting it. "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers." What these powers require of their subjects should be conscientiously rendered as involved in the duty which we owe to God, who placed them over us and gave them the authority to rule. "For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God." And such subjection is not limited by our judgment of the propriety and expediency of the demand made upon us. There could be no government if every citizen had the right to decide for himself what shall be regarded as obligatory. Nothing could then be binding upon all, and unjust men would resist all just measures. God requires us to be subject, even when the requirement does not commend itself as best to our judgment. "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake," says St. Peter, "whether it be to the king as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." 1 Pet. 2, 13–15. And a little further on in the same chapter the apostle expresses the principle that applies to all authorities which God has placed over us

in the family or in the state: "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and the gentle, but also to the forward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well and suffering for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps." 1 Pet. 2, 18–21. Our flesh is prone to resist what seems to us unfair and burdensome, and those who walk after the flesh will often array themselves against the government, even when they have no just cause of complaint. But a Christian can as such never be a rebel. He crucifies the flesh with its affections and lusts, and will rather suffer wrong than lift his hand against the minister of God, even though that minister seeks to oppress the subjects whose welfare he should promote. "Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." Rom. 13, 2. Pay your tribute to the government cheerfully, in gratitude to God, who grants you its protection; obey the laws scrupulously for conscience' sake, as the Lord who is King over all requires; and if you have the misfortune to live under rulers who do not fear God nor regard the right of men, suffer patiently until the Lord Himself in the way of order send you deliverance.

3. But if wicked rulers oppress the consciences of their subjects and issue commands which cannot be obeyed without violating the requirements made by God Himself in His holy Word, what shall be done then? Such conflict of authority has occurred and does occur. But the occurrence is not as frequent as is supposed. There is no such conflict when the rulers lay taxes that appear to us exorbi-

tant, or make laws that seem to us unreasonable or even unjust. What command is there in Scripture that would be violated by paying more tribute than seems to us just, or by obeying a law which seems to curtail our natural rights? What divine law forbids us to yield certain rights when the powers that God has ordained regard it to be necessary in order to secure the ends of the government? When a law appears to us unfair or unjust, it requires some self-denial to obey it; but is it not folly to think such self-denial a sin? In most cases in which there is an alleged conflict between civil and divine authority it is a conflict between the requirements of the powers that be and our own reason or sentiment, not between the powers that be and Holy Scripture. It is the flesh resisting the divine authority under pretence of resisting a human law because of its inconsistency with divine law. The powers that be are of God and the authority by which they rule is divine. Refusal to obey these powers, on the plea that they are not reasonable and just in their demands, is therefore refusal to obey the Lord, and this is no less a sin because what His servants require does not commend itself to their judgment. Christians will have no part nor lot in such subterfuges, and will not, in disregard of all humility, set up their own judgments as the standard to which all God's ministers must conform. But there are cases in which the conflict between the demands of rulers and the demands of Him who has set them over us and made them His ministers are really in conflict with each other. What is to be done then is not a difficult question. The case is decided by its mere statement. God has set rulers over us as His ministers for the good of the people, and when the rulers require what He has forbidden or forbid what He has required in His Word, whom shall we then obey? We are to obey the rulers only for the Lord's sake, that we

may in all things be subject to Him. They are not equal authorities, standing side by side with God, but are subordinate to Him. He must be obeyed. Therefore so far as they are manifestly against Him we owe them no allegiance, but are bound by our loyalty to the Lord of all, their Lord and ours, to refuse submission to them in order that we may be faithful to Him who alone gives them authority. When the apostles were imprisoned for preaching Christ, "the high priest asked them, saying, Did we not strictly command you that ye should not teach in this name? And, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than man." Acts 5, 27–29. Here was a case of real conflict between the civil rulers and the divine command, and here the principle is laid down that must govern Christian citizens in all similar cases. "We must obey God rather than men."

II. Therefore our Lord says further, *Render unto God the things that are God's.* He requires our hearts, our worship, our service, and these must be rendered as a primary condition of Christian citizenship. We can be citizens without this, but not Christian citizens; and we cannot remain Christians if we cease to render these even at the command of the powers that be. We cannot be faithful to God's ordinances when we are not faithful to God Himself.

1. Our Creator and Redeemer requires our hearts. He made us for Himself, in His own image, that we might glorify Him and find our happiness in Him. "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created." Rev. 4, 11. We are His, and can attain the end of our creation and enjoy the blessing of our Creator only when we live unto Him. That

we have become estranged from Him and have through sin become subject to another lord is true, but the sad fact does not change God's purpose and man's duty. To restore the original relation between the Creator and the unhappy creature the Son of God came into the world. He came in mercy to redeem us, that we might return to our rightful Lord and render unto God the things that are God's. "He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again." 2 Cor. 5, 15. And now He gives us His Holy Spirit in Word and Sacrament that we might receive Him into our hearts and by His grace consecrate ourselves to God and live unto Him. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not; but as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John 1, 11–13. The work of redemption has for its great object the deliverance of man from the terrible consequences of his departure from God, and the restoration of the soul to fellowship with its gracious Maker. Therefore the divine will is addressed to man; "My son, give me thy heart." Prov. 23, 26. This is obeyed when by the grace of God faith is wrought in the heart, by which it rests in confidence on the mercy of God and the merits of Christ, assured that all sin is pardoned and the wrath of God is averted. Therefore the Savior calls to us, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matt. 11, 28. Those who come in faith are accepted in the Beloved and have peace in believing. They are made children of God, and are gladly subject to their heavenly Father's will. Give your hearts to God: that is His due, as it is due to no creature. Withhold

that, and no work can be acceptable to Him. Give Cæsar what belongs to him, and do it for the Lord's sake, to whom you owe allegiance first; but render unto God the things that are God's. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment." Matt. 22, 37. 38. God has given no powers that be any authority to interfere with this prime duty, and no Christian citizen could obey the usurper who attempted such interference with the heart's allegiance to the Lord of all.

2. To God we must render our worship. It is His command, "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." Ps. 29, 2. Those who have been saved by grace have the prompting of the Spirit within them to confess the Savior's name before men, that He may have the praise of our salvation and that others may learn to know and embrace the Savior; and they delight to come together in the Lord's house and talk of all His wondrous works and offer the sacrifices of prayer and praise. "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed." Rom. 10, 8–11. It lies in the nature of a sincere devotion to God by faith in Christ Jesus that it will seek and find utterance in word and work. Therefore, congregations are formed of those who have in their hearts and express with their lips a common faith and who, because of such confession, know each other as brethren in Christ Jesus; and in such congregations the Gospel is preached and the sacra-

ments are administered in obedience to the Lord's command, and worship is conducted for the edification of the church. Therefore we are exhorted: "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for He is faithful that promised; and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching." Heb. 10, 22–25. That which is in the heart will press for utterance in words and works; "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," and therefore the Christian believer confesses his faith and worships the Lord, as the Lord has directed him to confess and worship. Such confession and worship are things which belong to God, and no persons have a right to forbid them. Should any rulers claim the right, the fact shows that they are usurping authority which God never gave them, and in such usurpation the Christian citizen cannot sustain them by obedience. He will recognize the existing powers as ordained of God, and will not therefore institute revolutionary proceedings for their overthrow. They are God's ministers still, though they err gravely in arrogating to themselves an authority which the Lord never gave them. But Christians will not obey when the ruler requires what duty to God forbids them to do; and if for such obedience to God rather than to man they must suffer, they suffer patiently, as that too belongs to the duties which they owe to God. Confess your Savior and worship your Lord whatever may be the consequences in time: in eternity all will be well. Render unto God the things which are God's.

3. That implies that our whole life should be a

service of God in the station and calling which His providence has assigned us. If we ourselves are His, all our strength and all our labor must be His also. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God," says St. Paul, "that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service; and be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Rom. 12, 1. 2. By nature we serve Satan, who has usurped the dominion of this world, which lieth in wickedness; but he is not our rightful lord, and it is a prostitution of the gifts with which our Creator has endowed us to use them in the service of sin. Such abuse can only bring disaster. "Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you. Being then made free from sin ye became the servants of righteousness." Rom. 6, 16–18. That is the glorious liberty which we Christians enjoy through the redemption in the Son of God, who bought us with a price. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Eph. 2, 10. Render such service to God. It belongs to Him. "Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him." Col. 3, 17. His grace has delivered you from the cruel bondage of Satan and sin and enabled you to serve the living God. Withhold not now such service. In all the relations of life, in the family and state as well as in the church, "let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Matt.

5, 16. You will thus, while you render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, render unto God the things that are God's.

The Church and the State are separate among us, as the Lord designed that they should be. But both are divine institutions, though for different ends and therefore with different means to attain them; and the Christian is called to the service of the Lord in both. A good Christian is as such a good citizen, performing in love to God and man, through faith in Christ Jesus, the duties which the Lord has enjoined, for the accomplishment of the Lord's will and the glory of the Lord's name. Believe in the Lord Jesus and live under Him in His kingdom, and your life will be a blessing to men and will end in blessedness; for "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." 1 Tim. 4, 8. Amen.

Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Trinity.

MATT. 9, 18–26.

While He spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshiped Him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay Thy hand upon her, and she shall live. And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did His disciples. And, behold, a woman which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind Him, and touched the hem of His garment: for she said within herself, If I may but touch His garment, I shall be whole. But Jesus turned Him about, and when He saw her, He said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour. And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels, and the people making a noise, He said unto them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed Him to scorn. But when the people were put forth, He went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose. And the fame hereof went abroad in all that land.

Dear Brethren:

Disease and death confront us everywhere on earth. They affect the body and the soul of man. Few can say that they have never been bodily sick; none can say that they have never been spiritually sick. And disease in both respects is but the process and harbinger of death. "The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it." Is. 1, 5. 6. Man knows no remedy in nature for the ills that are upon him. If he finds a temporary cure for some of his bodily ailments the root of the evil is still not reached: death comes at last in spite of all his skill. And for the spiritual disease there is absolutely no help in nature. Eternal death must inevitably come for all that science and art can do to stay its course. Is

there no deliverance to be found from the body of this death? "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?" Jer. 8, 22. It is because Christ, the Great Physician, is rejected, and there is help in none other. He is the Lord that healeth. This is again plainly shown in to-day's text. Let us devoutly ponder it as it sets before us

THE GREAT PHYSICIAN,

showing us that 1. *He heals the sick*, 2. *He wakes the dead*, and 3. *He saves the soul.* Grant us too Thy healing power, O great Physician!

I. *He heals the sick.* "Behold a woman which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years came behind Him and touched the hem of His garment; for she said within herself, If I may but touch His garment I shall be whole. But Jesus turned Him about, and when He saw her He said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour." The appeal of faith to the mercy and power of the great Physician is never made in vain. He helped the timid, trembling woman; He helps all who come to Him for help.

1. It was a case of unusual distress that presented itself in the poor woman whose modest conduct is so touchingly described. She had an issue of blood, and by the Jewish law was unclean. The disease had been of long standing and had been a constant trouble for many years. St. Mark relates that she "had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse." Mark 5, 26. And now she heard of a better Physician, to whom all power is given. She heard of Jesus, and of the mercy

which moved Him and of the virtue which went out from Him. He was now in the neighborhood: should she not go to Him and embrace the opportunity of her life to be delivered from her plague? Conscious of the nature of her infirmity and shrinking in her modesty from attracting any notice, she quickly pressed her way through the crowd and touched the Savior's garment, believing that any contact with this mighty Healer would heal her disease. But the Lord, who knoweth all things, knew the woman's movement and the woman's prayer. She was too timid to cry aloud for mercy, but her appeal was none the less clear and powerful. It was the silent prayer of a sincere heart that trusted the great Physician, and the great Physician knew it all and healed her. And modest and shrinking as she was, she was induced to confess her Lord and give Him the glory. St. Mark relates that "Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that virtue had gone out of Him, turned Him about in the press and said, Who touched my clothes? And His disciples said unto Him, Thou seest the multitude thronging Thee, and sayest Thou, Who touched me? And He looked round about to see her that had done this thing. But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before Him and told Him all the truth. And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole, go in peace, and be whole of thy plague." She received even more than she hoped. She was healed in body, and her soul had the peace of God. The great Physician does for those who put their trust in Him more than they are able to ask or think.

2. He does this for us also. He heals the sick still. He alone can heal them. And this applies not only to the spiritually sick. We are not now speaking especially of them. The pains and diseases to which our bodies are subject all have their root in sin. That brought death into

the world and all the diseases that lead to death. It has disordered everything, and in consequence of its ravages everything tends to dissolution. When that is once eradicated there will be no more death and no more disease that issues in death. But such eradication cannot take place in this life, because "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Heb. 9, 27. Even though the Savior has come to take away sin, it continues to work in our mortal bodies, and its temporal consequences are not arrested. Nature still groans under its burden, and men suffer sickness and pain and death. Only in the future world will it cease to exercise its deathly power upon the righteous. Here they too must suffer and die. That is the natural consequence of sin which not even the redemption has removed. But the Lord reigns, and now makes all things work together for good to them that love Him. He has power over disease and death. We are still subject to them, but the Lord is our Physician. We do not say that He heals all the bodily infirmities of those who come to Him. Believers too must die, and disease usually manifests itself before dissolution ensues. But we do say that "all power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth." Matt. 28, 18. When any one is healed, He does it. We are accustomed to call a physician when any one is sick, and we do well in this. All the means which a knowledge of nature furnishes for the cure of diseases should be thankfully employed, and it is right to call to our assistance men who have made these means a study. But the means are our Lord's, and have only such power as His good pleasure gives them; and He alone enables men to find the right remedy and rightly to apply it. When we trust in physicians, as if they had the power to heal, we are practicing idolatry. The healing power goes out from our Lord, who alone has overcome sin and can conquer its results. Therefore come

first of all to Him with your ailments. He alone can lead your physician to find the right remedy and make it effectual for your recovery, and He can restore your health without such remedy, if it so seem good in His sight. However it may be done, He does it. Not that He always helps as we think best. Sickness often continues though we go to Him, and death comes though we deplore it. He is judge of what is best. But there is no other help than that which He affords, and He helps in due time, even though it be by letting disease work out its results in death, and through this by giving us deliverance from all earth's woes. He has all in His power, and rules over all in mercy, overruling all for the good of His people. Therefore trust this great Physician, who heals all your diseases, making your afflictions subserve the interests of your souls and finally leading you to the glory where sorrows never come. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies." Ps. 103, 2–4.

II. *He wakes the dead.* This great Physician's power is not at an end, like that of ordinary physicians, when the heart has ceased to beat and the limbs lie cold in death. He can help and does help when to human vision all seems over. "When He spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler and worshiped Him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay Thy hand upon her and she shall live. And Jesus arose and followed him, and so did His disciples." "And when Jesus came into the ruler's house and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise, He said unto them, Give place, for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed Him to scorn. But when the people were put forth, He went in and took her by the hand, and the maid arose. And

the fame hereof went abroad in all that land." He waked the little daughter of Jairus from the sleep of death, and by the same power and mercy He will wake us and our dead in His own good time.

1. The ruler's daughter was sick unto death, and he knew of the great Physician who could help when all human helpers failed. In his deep distress he goes to Him and humbly and trustingly appeals to His mercy. He says that His daughter is even now dead. She was living yet when he set out to seek the great Physician's aid, but the words which he uses show how great were the fears in his soul that it might be too late if His coming were not hastened. Probably the statement that "she is even now dead" was the outburst of his agony after he had told the Lord, as St. Mark reports his words, "My little daughter lieth at the point of death." Whether his knowledge of the great Physician's power was sufficient to inspire him with confidence that He could help even after death had ensued, does not appear from the text, but certainly his household thought that then all entreaties would be useless. For when on the way He healed the woman with an issue of blood, "while He yet spake there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any farther." But for Jesus it was not too late, and He did not stay His journey because of the sad news which the messengers brought. The prayer of faith was heard and the little girl should live. He proceeded to the ruler's house, and there was met by every indication that all was over. The mourners were performing their office according to the custom of the country, and preparations were in progress to lay the little lifeless form away to its rest. When He told them to "give place, for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth," they only laughed Him to scorn. They knew she was dead, and they thought that any efforts to awake

her would be absurdly futile. The fact of her decease was known to all, and had been communicated to the ruler and his companions before they reached the house. It is therefore a vain thing which infidels imagine, that the maiden had merely fallen into a trance and that our Lord's apparent miracle was only a natural waking from a death-like sleep. They do not in their blindness perceive that, even if this were the case, Jesus would have shown His divine majesty by His knowledge of a condition which no man else could know or professed to know. If she was not dead, they all thought she was, and only omniscience could know that she was not. But if she was dead, why does the Lord say, "She is not dead, but sleepeth?" Because in His eye death is but a sleep, and He meant to show them in this moment that it is but a sleep, though in many cases it is a sleep that continues long. When the mother lays her child in its bed and commends it to our Father's care for the night, He gives it sleep, and when the morning comes He wakes it again. When she lays her child away in the grave He gives it sleep, and when the resurrection morning shall dawn He wakes it again. We do not forever cease to breathe when that ensues which we call death. It is but a sleep. So the Bible frequently speaks of it. So our Lord spake of another whom He waked to life, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." John 11, 11. So St. Paul says: "Now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first-fruits of them that slept." 1 Cor. 15, 20. And so we are comforted by the apostle in view of our departed loved ones: "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." 1 Thess. 4, 13. 14. In the case of the ruler's little daughter the sleep-

was short as that which refreshes us in our night's rest. Therefore He said, "She is not dead, but sleepeth." And they could all see that it was even so; for "He went in and took her by the hand, and the maid arose." The great Physician had waked her out of the sleep of death, and shown that His power extends beyond this present life. "And the fame hereof went abroad in all that land," and has gone abroad in every land and reached our ears also. Let it induce us to trust Him for time and for eternity.

2. He will wake our dead also. Who of us has not gone, with a heavy heart, to the place of burial to lay away a form that was very dear to us for the sake of the soul that dwelt in it, but was torn from it by the relentless hand of death? We have seen loved ones die and have been bereaved, refusing to be comforted, because they were not. And our thoughts have gone back to the time of Jairus and of Mary and Martha and of the widow of Nain, and have sighed that the great Physician who helped in those bygone days was not with us to deliver from the cruel jaws of death. But is not that mighty, loving Lord with us as He was with the people who put their trust in Him centuries ago? Yea, verily. He is the same Lord still, and He is with us yet. And He wakes the dead. Only we must have patience until His set time comes. Our dear ones sleep. That sleep may seem long to us, and our hearts are sad that this separation continues so many days; but they sleep, and the same Lord that waked the ruler's little daughter will wake them also. Only possess your souls in patience: a little while and you shall see them again. "I am the resurrection and the life," He tells us; "he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." John 11, 25. 26. Not only for the short time of our Lord's visible sojourn on earth was He the great Physician, but for all

time. He is a very present help in trouble until the end of time, and His help reaches into eternity. Death must still come, although He has taken its sting away and made it for believers but an entrance into His kingdom of glory. Therefore He has power not only to heal diseases, but to wake the dead, that those who are His may enter into the joys of their Lord. The body sleeps in the earth, while the spirit returns to God who gave it. But this sleep has an end, and the soul and body shall in due time be joined again and stand in the Lord's presence in glory for ever. "When the Son of man shall come in His glory and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit on the throne of His glory; and before Him shall be gathered all nations, and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Matt. 25, 31–34. The dead shall rise again. They are not dead, but sleeping. The Son of God, who was made flesh for our salvation, will not permit the bodies of His redeemed to lie for ever in the grave. He who waked the ruler's daughter will wake us and our dead also. He is the great Physician that has provided and applies a remedy even for death. He lives, and we shall live also. "Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

III. *He saves the soul.* There is a disease that is worse than all the physical ailments which lead to bodily death and worse than the bodily death to which they lead, and its consequences are terrible beyond all power of utterance. And from that disease too, with its fearful results, the great Physician delivers us. He healeth all our diseases. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." Matt. 1, 21. That is

what is meant when He says to the woman in our text, "Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole." The bodily disease was healed, but the remedy went to the root of the matter and healed her soul also.

1. There is a disease which is worse than all aches and pains and sicknesses and bruises of the body and of which these are only symptoms. It preys upon men even when earthly physicians pronounce them well, and its ravages, unless arrested by a mightier power than man's and more potent remedies than nature's, go on for ever. It is sin, the wages of which is death. So deeply seated is this in the constitution of man that even when the divine remedy is applied and the eternal consequences are removed, it still works disease and pain of body and mind, and is not destroyed until it has wrought dissolution. These consequences are under the government of God, and by His providence He disposes them in wisdom and in mercy. Therefore the wicked sometimes seem to flourish and the righteous to suffer adversity. To us that seems strange, because we judge that the visible consequences must manifest the hidden cause and determine the degree of its power. But it is not so. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor my ways your ways, saith the Lord." Is. 55, 8. The disease will work death, but when that result shall be reached God decides. It works all manner of earthly pain and trouble, but how much it shall work in each individual does not depend on the degree of its potency in the soul. It is potent enough in every soul to bring immediate destruction. But God rules; and if it seems good in His sight to let an unrighteous man enjoy good things in this life, while a righteous man enters through much tribulation into the kingdom of God, the pious heart will adore in this the goodness of the Lord, who would lead sinners to repentance and make the light affliction work out a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. He

uses all things, even the consequences of man's disobedience, to compass His ends of good will to men. But the end must come, and if the disease which produces all other diseases and works dissolution is not remedied, it will go on with its deadly work even after death, and everlasting and irremediable misery will be the result in the second death. That is the eternal torment of hell.

2. To save us from that was the prime object of the great Physician's advent on earth. He came to save His people from their sins. In pursuance of this object He went about doing good and healing all manner of diseases, but always preaching the Gospel of the kingdom and proclaiming the righteousness of God and fulfilling all righteousness in man's behalf. This merciful Physician who restored to the ruler his beloved daughter and healed the woman of her issue of blood, sought by word and deed to draw all men unto Himself that they might be healed of all diseases for ever. He was maligned, maltreated, persecuted. But He went on with His work of mercy until the end came. They crucified the Lord of glory. But the suffering of death was also part of His work. The dreadful disease of sin must work out its results, and as He took our sins upon Himself, He must die. "He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from Him. He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed." Is. 53, 3–5. The work which He did was done for us, that all the righteousness required of us might be fulfilled; the sufferings and death which He endured were endured for us, that the penalty of our transgressions might be paid. He is

the great Physician that heals the disease of the soul, but "with His stripes we are healed." There would be no healing without atonement. Only the blood of Jesus, the Son of God, cleanseth from all sin. In virtue of that He went about healing the dreadful disease that brings eternal death.

3. But how is it with us? Those times in which the great Physician walked visibly among men and healed all manner of disease are long since past, and the gates of heaven have opened and let the King of glory in. How is it with us? It seems to so many as if the great Physician were now afar off, away from this earth where we labor and suffer, and inaccessible to our burdened souls. It is not so, my brethren, it is not so. He is here. He has not forsaken His people. He will not leave us. He is here now, ready to heal. For He has told us, "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you." John 14, 18. Before He ascended into heaven He said to His disciples: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Matt. 28, 18–20. The healing work of the great Physician is still going on. The messengers whom He sends out to preach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments, do the work in His name and with means that He has appointed and that carry His power. Where these are He is; where these are applied the healing remedy of the great Physician is applied. Therefore I say, He is here now, and ready to heal the souls of all that come to Him.

4. But when He calls so many will not believe and will not come. That is the great trouble. The complaint

was made in the olden time: "This people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." Matt. 13, 15. Is it not amazing, that people should be dying of a terrible disease, and when the great Physician comes to heal them, they reject Him! But are not such sad things repeated in our days and among us also? Has not our Lord reason to say of some of you, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life?" John 5, 40. The ruler worshiped the great Physician and trusted in His healing power; the timid woman had such confidence in Him that she believed if she might but touch His garment she would be healed. That is what He asks of us. "Thy faith hath made thee whole." That faith He Himself works in the soul; why will ye resist the work of His Spirit and choose to die in your sins, O ye that have not believed in Jesus and confessed His name? Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and it shall be to thee according to thy faith. Thou shalt be of good comfort, because the curse is removed and the mercy of God is assured through the blood of the Lamb. And ye that have believed, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear." Matt. 13, 16. Only continue in the Word, and grow in grace and in knowledge, that ye may through the grace of the great Physician be steadfast unto death, when you shall be released from every pain and, perfectly healed, enter into the joys of your Lord. Amen.

Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Trinity.

MATT. 24, 15–28.

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand,) then let them which be in Judea, flee into the mountains: let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: neither let him who is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, He is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.

Brothers and sisters beloved in the Lord:

God is just. Therefore sin can not go unpunished. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." Rom. 1, 18. Hence wicked men tremble when they think of God and would fain banish Him from their thoughts. Only when He is known as the Father reconciled in Christ can He become to the soul an object of love instead of dread. He is angry with the wicked every day, and their own consciences testify the fact and approve it. "Our God is a consuming fire." Heb. 12, 29. Wrong can not be done

with impunity. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." Rom. 12, 29. There is a righteous retribution, and there must be, because God who governs all is righteous. Justice will surely overtake the evil-doer. He cannot escape it, because he cannot escape the all-seeing and everywhere present God. His judgments come upon men in time; they will surely come at the end of time. Even His own people are not spared when they depart from the ways of righteousness. The children of Israel were highly favored, "but with many of them God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted." 1 Cor. 10, 5. 6. Such an example is also before us in our text. Jerusalem neglected the things which belonged to its peace, and destruction came. It is an instance of God's judgment visited upon wickedness in time. But that is but a foretaste and prophecy of the judgment to come on the last day. It is an example of the ministration of righteousness which shall be perfected when the Lord of Glory comes again to judge the quick and the dead. Let us then consider for our admonition and comfort

THE JUDGMENT UPON JERUSALEM AS A CALL TO PREPARE FOR THE LAST JUDGMENT.

And may He who in mercy gives us the call give us grace also to heed it.

I. Let us look at *the sign of its coming.* "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand), then let them that are in Judea flee into the mountains." This refers primarily to a profanation that draws down the wrath of

Heaven upon the holy city, but also, though secondarily, to the profanations that provoke and indicate the final judgment of the world.

1. In the place that was consecrated to God, and that should have been entered with reverence and godly fear, an 'abomination stood. A horror was introduced where sacrifices were offered to the Holy One and where prayer was wont to be made. And that abomination spread desolation all around. What special act of profanation is had in view we have not now the means of knowing, nor is it needful that we should know. The people to whom these words were first addressed and to whom the sign should serve as a warning, could understand it, and were exhorted to understand it that they might profit by it. The abomination and the desolation which it wrought were before their eyes, and pointed to the coming of the Roman legions whose din should resound in their ears. To us the special sign and that which it portended lie in the past, and the whole presents itself to us as an example of divine judgment, and of divine mercy forewarning of its coming.

2. But just for that reason the abomination of desolation which is before our eyes now in the holy place is a call to us to prepare for the judgment whose coming it forebodes. Such an abomination is that which St. Paul describes when he says to the Thessalonians: "Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped; so that he as god sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." 2 Thess. 2, 3. 4. If any one had doubts before whether the pope at Rome is meant, these doubts should be dispelled by the modern proclamation of His infallibility. He presumes to dictate

to immortal souls, as if he were God, what must be believed and done to inherit eternal life, and these dictations are often in the very face of what God Himself has revealed and required. And he sits with his ungodly arrogance in the temple of God, and deals out damnation upon men who will not be his slaves. That is an abomination of desolation that cries aloud of the approaching end of all things. The Roman Antichrist has been exposed by the Reformation, and all is ready for his destruction by the brightness of our Lord's coming. But not only this indicates the approaching end. The abominations which have been admitted into Christian churches and Christian homes by the indifference and coldness and callousness of Christians, not to say their utter unbelief, are manifold. So great is the liberalism and rationalism and sentimentalism that now passes for progressive Christianity that a man who adheres strictly to the words of the Master is regarded as a relic of the dark ages, who has not learned the Gospel of enlightenment and the advanced charity of disenthralled humanity. And the recklessness in morals keeps pace with indifference in doctrine. A conscientious service of God, in the vocation which God has given, is represented as a superstition which increased intelligence has banished, and the fear of God is barely tolerated as a childish sentiment of an uncultured mind that must not be permitted to hamper business with its crudities. Family prayer and family instruction in the Catechism, where do you find this now? Cards and novels and dances have usurped their place, if not something far worse. The abomination of desolation is among us, and indicates that the end of all things is at hand. When you see it standing in the holy place, flee to the place of refuge. Consider

II. *The warning to escape.* This is worded with reference to the catastrophe that threatened Jerusalem,

but in its general import applies to us also, urging us to prepare for the coming end of all things. It bids us flee, to make haste, to stop at no impediments, to pray for help and deliverance to Him who alone can rescue us from the threatening ruin.

1. When the abomination is seen, "then let them which be in Judea flee to the mountains." Many of the Jews heeded the warning and fled to Pella when the destroyer came. There they were safe from the horrors that raged in the holy city. But whither shall we flee when the whole earth shall be summoned to judgment and all the elements shall melt with fervent heat? There is no hiding place in all the world where there is immunity from the final destruction. And yet there is a refuge for us where all are secure. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." Ps. 46, 1. To that refuge we are not only permitted to run, but the Lord calls us to come and find safety. Therefore "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." Ps. 121, 1. 2. The end is approaching: flee to these hills and find safety when heaven and earth shall pass away.

2. And make haste; do not delay your flight. "Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house; neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes." When they should see the abomination of desolation in the holy place, the people of God should make their escape from the doomed city by the speediest way possible, and should not permit any thought of rescuing property to interfere with rescuing their lives. Those on the housetops should run across the flat roofs and get out of the city by the quickest route, and those who were in the field should not think of going

back first to their homes to save at least their clothing. They should hasten to save their lives. And that is what we are to learn from the warning. The abomination of desolation has appeared, and the end is coming. Flee for your lives. Do not think of securing this earthly prize and enjoying that earthly pleasure first. What would it profit you if you gained the whole world and lost your soul? Let nothing deter you from getting ready for the Lord's coming. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." All the rest, even though the coming of the Lord be long delayed, will then be amply provided for. Attend to these things now, for now is the day of salvation. Even things which were God's own ordinance, if they should cause delay in the flight from Jerusalem, are spoken of as a misfortune. "Woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days. But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day." Not that child-bearing and nursing, that winters and sabbaths are an evil. They are all God's own appointments and are very good. But to carry a child in the womb or in the arms, was a hindrance to speedy flight; the weather and the roads of winter were impediments to a hasty escape from the city; and the law of the sabbath forbade a journey of more than a mile on the holy day. These things are no hindrances in fleeing from the impending judgment, but their mention shows us that everything on earth, even though it be father or mother or son or daughter, the best and dearest that this life has, must be regarded as a calamity when it stands in the way or hinders us in fleeing from the wrath to come. The one absorbing thought must be to escape the destruction and find a refuge that is safe. Therefore pray ye for deliverance from every power and every entanglement that endangers your life by hindering your flight. You have not the power in yourselves to break the bonds that

constitute the danger; you have not the power in yourselves to flee; you have not the power in yourselves to make your flight a success. Ask God for light and life and strength. "Pray ye." We have a God that heareth prayer and is ever ready to help. Call upon Him. He will hear you and give you what you need to comply with His warning, that you may escape

III. *The coming tribulation.* "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." The destruction of Jerusalem brought and the end of the world shall bring terrible things, which all should earnestly wish to escape.

1. The words of our text refer to the tribulation which befell the doomed city of Jerusalem in its siege and destruction by the Romans. It was a scene of horror unparallelled in the annals of time. War and famine and pestilence combined to make it a calamity beyond the power of human language to depict. "For the days shall come upon thee," says our Lord, "that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave within thee one stone upon another, because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." Luke 19, 43. 44. These words were literally fulfilled in the destruction of the city, and in their fulfillment hundreds of thousands perished. The unburied corpses bred pestilence, and the famine drove people to madness and desperation, so that cases occurred of mothers eating their own children. It is a terrible history to read, and the tribulation came because Jerusalem forgot God and despised His Word.

2. And great shall be the tribulation also when the final judgment which is prefigured by this shall come. "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the

sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken; and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." Matt. 24, 29. 30. "And there shall be signs in the sun and in the moon and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." Luke 21, 25. 26. When all this vast fabric of God's creation shall have accomplished its end and shall fall to pieces in a final crash, even strong hearts that viewed the thunderstorm with delight and trembled not when the cyclone came, shall quake with fear, if they have not sought security in Him who has provided a refuge for His people. For "the day of the Lord shall come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting to the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." 2 Pet. 3, 10–12. And the distress and terror of the ungodly shall not cease when "the wreck of matter and the crush of worlds" is past and the end of all things has come. Their tribulation then only begins in the eternal doom of those who rejected God and are now rejected for evermore. That is the tribulation of which the unspeakable horrors of Jerusalem's fate are but a faint emblem. But those who heed the warning and hear the voice of their Savior, coming to Him in repentance and faith and

waiting for His coming in daily watchfulness and prayer, shall not be disheartened when the tribulation comes. They are safe in Him who is their refuge, and they lift up their hearts amid the dissolution and consternation, for their redemption draweth nigh. Therefore flee to

IV. *The mercy* which never fails, though judgments come. There is mercy in the warning which aims at securing man's escape from the tribulation; there is mercy in the exhortation to prayer, which implies God's readiness to hear and help; and there is mercy in the divine providence which shapes all things for the welfare of those who believe in Jesus.

1. The obvious purpose of pointing to the abomination of desolation in the holy place as the sign of coming doom and of giving the earnest warning in connection with it to flee from the approaching destruction which it indicates, was to arouse the people of Jerusalem to a sense of their danger and to invite them to escape. It was the divine compassion yearning to save from ruin even the people whose sin was bringing that ruin about. That compassion is tenderly expressed in our Lord's words: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Matt. 23, 37. And now when, notwithstanding all the warnings and entreaties of the Lord, the multitude remained impenitent and the tribulation came, His mercy continued to all who were willing to embrace it; for He says, "Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." The elect are the people who received the Lord and hearkened to His Word; and for their sakes the tribulation caused by the war and famine and pestilence was not permitted to continue until every inhabitant of the doomed city was

destroyed. As God would have spared Sodom for the sake of ten righteous persons, if such had been found, He did shorten the days of distress in Jerusalem's fall for the sake of the righteous souls yet found among the ungodly people. The mercy of the Lord endureth for ever.

2. And that mercy is great towards us also. It is that which moves our Lord to give us the warnings which are to-day again set before us for our learning. He would have us all realize that the end is coming and be in readiness. His mercy has provided a way of escape from the ruin that shall overtake His foes, and now calls upon us to flee from the wrath to come. Therefore "take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end; while it is said, To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation." Heb. 3, 12–15. The announcement that the end of all things is approaching is designed to arouse us also to be ready every day and every hour for the coming of the Son of man, the more so as we know not the day and the hour when He shall appear. "For as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." We should be prepared for His advent at any moment, for it shall be sudden, like the lightning's flash. And the signs of the coming tribulation are given us that we may be incited to make no delay in preparing. "For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together." The proverbial expression probably means in this connection to say, that where sin abounds the judgments of God will come, as the eagles come where the carcass is discovered. Certainly the judgments of

God will come upon the wicked, and it is divine mercy that warns us and entreats us to escape the tribulation that shall come upon the unrighteous when the Son of man shall come to judge the quick and the dead. Therefore "take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." Luke 22, 34–36. Recognize the mercy of God in giving you warning and offering you the needful grace to escape the coming ruin. Recognize the mercy which is shown in shortening the days of distress for the saints of God on earth. The abomination of desolation is a constant temptation to sin and leads many to destruction. While it is a mercy to the ungodly that God postpones the day of judgment in order to give them more time for repentance, it is a mercy to His people that He shortens the time of delay in order to remove them from the temptations and afflictions to which they are subject in this wilderness of probation. "For the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." Therefore the saints love the Lord's appearing, and fervently pray, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." For the mercy of God, which has provided for their salvation from sin and death, has prepared for them a home of bliss eternal in the heavens. But before that home is reached we must pass through the trials of this earthly life. Consider, therefore,

V. *The danger* besetting us, that you may cling more closely to Him whose mercy alone can preserve you from falling. "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there, believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs

and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, He is in the desert, go not forth; behold, He is in the secret chambers, believe it not."

1. Before the destruction of Jerusalem these words were literally fulfilled. Some pretended to be the Messiah promised in the Old Testament and sought to lead souls away from Jesus, the true Messiah, in whom all the promises were fulfilled. And they deceived many, leading them away from the living springs to cisterns that hold no water, and bringing upon themselves and their dupes swift destruction. There were false prophets who ran, though they were not sent, and set forth their own vain fancies, which could only lead astray, instead of the word of the Lord, in which alone is life and salvation. And they wrought marvels, which had the semblance of miracles, and deceived many unwary souls. This too belonged to the tribulation of those dreadful times, though that which brought the greatest danger was by many regarded as the way of safety. The people were warned; behold, the Lord had in mercy told them before; but the warning was not heeded; and multitudes perished whom the Lord would fain have rescued from the ruin that overwhelmed them.

2. And there are false Christs and false prophets showing great signs and wonders now, "insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." St. Peter writes: "There were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways." 2 Pet. 2, 12. And St. Paul also warns us that "in the last days perilous times shall come." 2 Tim. 3, 1.

Not only is Romanism again more busy than ever with its lying wonders and proud pretensions, leading souls to trust in their own merits instead of the merits of our blessed Savior, and preaching its own dreams instead of the Lord's words, but error in a thousand forms is spread among the people, and false prophets of every hue, from the gross deceivers of Mormonism and Spiritism to the self-deceived Perfectionists, are plying their nefarious trade to the ruin of many souls. And the danger is all the greater because Satan has blinded the eyes of multitudes, even of those who profess to be followers of Jesus, so that they do not see the ruinous consequences of false doctrine, but attribute it to bigotry and uncharitableness when vigilant and earnest men lift a warning voice against its deadly power. Therefore there is a clamor for union without putting away the error which separates, and the indifference to truth which is in the world is preying upon the vitals of the church. The abomination of desolation has appeared, warning us that the end is approaching, and the perilous times of the last days are upon us. All around you men are crying, Lo, here is Christ, or there; and so many, O so deplorably many, having lost their confidence in the sure word of prophecy, which points us to the Word of God and the Holy Sacraments in the Church as the only place where Christ is to be found, run to and fro in the world—to the desert and the secret chambers, to the anxious bench and to the cloister—in the vain hope of finding Him where He has not placed His name. Will ye also go away? God has graciously given you the truth in the Ev. Lutheran Church, and now warns you of the danger. Beware of false prophets; hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end; so will you escape the tribulation of the last times, and be ready for the coming of the Lord in glory to judge the world in righteousness.

Be ye ready, for the Lord will surely come, perhaps very soon. The world has stood well-nigh six thousand years, and the long past suggests to many minds the probability of a long future for this earth. But the end must come, and may come to-morrow as well as a thousand years hence. "There shall come in the last days scoffers," says St. Peter, "walking after their own lusts and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." But "the Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up." 2 Pet. 3, 3. 4. 9. 10. The destruction of Jerusalem shows us that judgment must come; the Word of God announces a final judgment upon the world. O brethren, be ye ready, that when the end shall come you may be safe in Jesus. Amen.

Twenty-Sixth Sunday after Trinity.

MATT. 25, 31–46.

When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was a hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee a hungered, and fed Thee? or thirsty, and gave Thee drink? When saw we Thee a stranger, and took Thee in? or naked, and clothed Thee? or when saw we Thee sick, or in prison, and came unto Thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was a hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee a hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or in prison, and did not minister unto Thee? Then shall He answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

Dear Brethren:

This is the last Sunday of the church year, and our gospel very appropriately directs our thoughts to the last things. This world must have an end. The seeds of dissolution are in it and cannot fail to produce their results.

Heaven and earth shall pass away. But the souls that are in it shall not cease to exist. Man is not constituted like the brutes that perish. He has an immortal soul which is capable of endless happiness and endless misery. That shall continue to live when the earth and all that is in it shall have been burned up. The Lord shall come and assign to each his place of everlasting abode. It is this that makes life so solemn a thing. There is a judgment day approaching, when every one shall receive according to the deeds done in the body; and from that award there shall be no appeal, and its results shall remain for ever unchanged. The word of the Lord, which makes us sure of this, shall not pass away. Hear therefore with earnest attention what our text teaches of

THE FINAL JUDGMENT.

It gives us information about 1. *The Coming of the Judge*, 2. *The Arraignment of the Nations*, and 3. *The Decision of the Court.* May the Lord give us hearing ears and understanding hearts!

I. The text announces the coming of the Judge. "When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory." This makes known to us who it is that shall judge the quick and the dead, and describes the manner of His coming to execute the judgment.

1. The Judge is the Son of man. That is the name that is given to the incarnate Son of God because He was born of a woman for our salvation. And it is not without reason that just that name is mentioned in this connection. It is fitting that He who was despised and rejected of men when He came not to condemn, but to save the world, should be their judge in the end. "For as the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given the Son to have life

in Himself, and hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man." John 5, 26. 27. Our Savior is true God from eternity, the second person of the adorable Trinity. But He took upon Himself our nature and thus became a true man. As such it was given Him to have life in Himself, and as man authority was conferred upon Him to judge the world. As He was visibly on earth in a human body and visibly ascended into heaven, so He shall visibly come again and cite the nations to judgment. The man Christ Jesus shall be the Judge of all. "We are witnesses of all things which He did," says St. Peter, "both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day and showed Him openly, not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead. And He commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is He which was ordained of God to judge the quick and the dead." Acts 10, 39–42. The lowly Savior, living as a servant among men with no place to lay His head, had all power given to Him in heaven and in earth, and in virtue of that power He should execute the judgment of the world. As true God He had that power before the foundations of the world were laid, but it was given Him also as man when our human nature was taken into the unity of His person; and now the Son of man shall come to judge.

2. But He shall come in His glory, with a retinue of holy angels, and shall sit upon the throne of His glory. It was necessary for His work of redemption that He should appear on earth in poverty and suffering, so that the world could not see His majesty. He "made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and be-

came obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Phil. 2, 7. 8. But the days of His humiliation are past, and He wears the crown of glory now, since the work of redemption is finished and death and hell are conquered. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Phil. 2, 9–11. In the majesty of this glory He shall come to the final judgment. When on the mount of transfiguration some rays of that glory were displayed before Peter and James and John, "His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light;" how then shall the heavenly splendor be described when He shall come arrayed in all His royal majesty and all His divine glory shall shine forth? Angels ministered to Him when He walked a man of sorrows on earth; now the hosts of heaven shall accompany Him in royal state to honor the glorious King of kings and render His coming radiant. The hosts of shining ones around the Majesty of heaven upon His resplendent throne—such glory was never seen on earth before! And all shall behold the King in His glory. "Behold He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him." Rev. 1, 7. For our text tells of

II. The arraignment of all people before the throne of His glory. "Before Him shall be gathered all nations, and He shall separate them from one another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left." All men without exception shall be cited before the bar of judgment, and a separation into two classes shall be made by the Son of man, who knoweth all things and judges righteous judgment.

1. All nations shall be gathered before the glorious tribunal of the Son of man. To Him all men are responsible, and before Him all shall be called to account. There is no exception, and, because He is just, there can be no exception. "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ," writes St. Paul. "For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." Rom. 14, 10–12. And in another place he says: "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." 2 Cor. 5, 10. 11. Men are not their own masters, but stewards of the Lord, and must give an account of their stewardship. Therefore all must appear before Him on that great day of reckoning. He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

The summons of the great King who made us all shall go forth and call together the generations that walked this earth from Adam's time until that great day. His almighty voice shall call to life again all who have departed from earth. "And I saw a great white throne," writes St. John, "and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up their dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works." Rev. 20, 11–13. From the bowels of the earth and from the depths of the sea, from the populous cemeteries of great cities and

from the clefts where solitary travelers perished and were never heard of more, the awakened millions shall come together into the awful presence of the Judge of all the earth to get their final hearing and receive their final sentence. The general judgment implies the general resurrection. That is an important article in the Christian faith. "As touching the dead, that they rise, have ye not read in the book of Moses how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living." Mark 12, 26, 27. Therefore the bodies of the dead, as integral parts of their being, must rise again and join the living souls. The resurrection of our Lord certifies this. "Now if Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen; and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain and your faith is also vain." 1 Cor. 15, 12–14. The dead of all nations and all times shall hear the voice calling them from their sleep, and shall be presented before the judgment seat of Christ.

But some shall be living yet when the Son of man shall come in His glory. These too He shall judge. He shall come to judge the quick, that is, the living, and the dead. "Behold, I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this incorruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." 1 Cor. 15, 51–53. It will not be necessary for those who are living when our Lord shall come, to pass through death. That is what is meant by the declaration that we shall not all sleep. Death is but a sleep from which all

shall be waked on the resurrection day, and those who have then not died shall not sleep to be instantly waked again. But they shall undergo a change, in which the corruptible shall put on incorruption and the mortal shall put on immortality. And these as well as the dead who are raised up shall stand before the judgment throne of the King in His glory, and the righteous shall rejoice in His presence and be for ever blessed in His kingdom. "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." 1 Thess. 4, 13–17. But this does not pertain to all men. For not all who die are dead in Christ, and not all who live are His people. All shall be brought before His judgment bar.

2. But there shall be a separation. The Lord knows the hearts and lives of all men, and all their deeds are recorded in the book of His remembrance. According to His unerring knowledge "He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left." He makes no mistakes, and cannot be deceived. Men may pass as righteous before their fellow men, though inwardly they are full of wickedness. Men may hide away their crimes

from the sight of men, who cannot see into the recesses of the heart, and practice shrewd deception upon them. But all such trickery is of no avail with the all-seeing eye of the Son of man. We cannot cheat Him with our hypocrisy; we cannot hide away from Him, so that He cannot find us; we cannot conceal our thoughts and deeds so that He shall not know them. The deeds that are done in darkness are all open to His eye; the thoughts and feelings of sin that we have disclosed to no mortal, are all known to His omniscience. "If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god, shall not God search this out? for He knoweth the secrets of the heart." Ps. 44, 20. 21. Hence the apostle speaks of the last time as "the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." Rom. 2, 16. "There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, and hid that shall not be known," says our Lord. Matt. 10, 26. In accordance with His unfailing knowledge of all that is in men's hearts and all that has proceeded thence in the lives of men, the Son of man shall effect a separation between the just and the unjust, between those that are His and those that are against Him. Only two classes are made; not, as some imagine, the good who are by grace prepared for glory, the bad who are by nature fitted for destruction, and the partly good and partly bad who are worthy neither of heaven or hell. Those who by such a scheme seek to find a semblance of reason for the figment of purgatory only manifest their want of knowledge respecting the plan of salvation, or their want of faith in the Savior's words, or both. He that is not with the Savior is against Him: he that is not saved by the blood of Jesus through faith in His name is lost for ever. The Son of man shall divide the just from the unjust, the sheep from the goats. To one or the

other class, the one on His right hand, the other on the left, all shall be assigned.

III. Then shall come the decision and the final and irrevocable sentence. Those on His right hand shall be acquitted and pronounced blessed, and shall enter into life eternal; those on His left hand shall be condemned and pronounced accursed, and shall go away into everlasting punishment. The sinners who reject grace shall receive justice.

1. "Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungered, and fed Thee? or thirsty, and gave Thee drink? When saw we Thee a stranger, and took Thee in? or naked, and clothed Thee? Or when saw we Thee sick or in prison, and came unto Thee. And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

There is a kingdom prepared from eternity for those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and glorify His name by doing His holy will on earth. The lamentable work which the devil has done in the world has not effected the destruction of the whole human race. It is a sad work, that of introducing sin and misery among creatures that God made holy and happy, and countless millions are ruined by it in body and soul for evermore. But God, who foresaw the fall, provided a means of escape from its dreadful consequences. He prepared a kingdom of grace, in which the acquired righteousness of His incarnate Son,

the Son of man who shall be the Judge of all on the last day, should avail for all them that believe in Him and should render them heirs of glory. Into that kingdom we are called by the Gospel, that through the mercy of our God we might be delivered from sin and death, and live in His kingdom in the heavenly mansions for ever. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved: in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." Eph. 1, 3–7. Those in whom the gracious purpose of God in Christ is accomplished shall not perish, but the blood of Jesus, appropriated by faith, shall cleanse them of all their sin and make them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

But because God hath chosen us in Christ our Savior "that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love," the King takes account of the works of love in the final judgment. Christ came into the world to save sinners, and when by His grace faith is wrought in the soul, it has peace and rejoices in the hope of the glory of God. Our own holiness could never save us, for it is always imperfect in this life. We sin in manifold ways, and our best works are not free from the taint of our sinful nature. "We are all as an unclean thing," says the prophet, "and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Isa. 64, 6. "If we say that we have no sin," says the apostle, "we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." 1 John 1, 8. Therefore so much stress is laid in the Bible, and in

the Church that is faithful to the Bible, upon the sinner's justification through the merits of Christ by faith, which embraces these merits. By His righteousness, not by ours, are we saved. He bore the punishment of our transgressions, and now by faith we have forgiveness. We are thus acquitted in the judgment. Without that there would be no kingdom for us to inherit and we could not be blessed of the Father. But the faith which clings to the Savior and inherits the kingdom is the faith that works by love, and the fruits are the evidences of its life. The final object of the salvation in Christ is to restore mankind to the original happiness from which it has fallen, and this end is not attained without holiness. "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification." 1 Thess. 4, 3. The Savior "gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Tit. 2, 14. Accordingly the Lord mentions the good works which were done in His name by those on His right hand, and pronounces these persons blessed because the purpose of grace was accomplished in them. According to the will of God they fed the hungry and gave drink to the thirsty, they clothed the naked and visited the sick, they welcomed the stranger and comforted the prisoner, and the deeds that were done in love are accepted as a service rendered to Him. Such love can exist only in hearts that are justified by faith; but where there is true faith that justifies by embracing the Savior's righteousness, they will not fail. Therefore those who are His people are blessed because they serve Him, and the joyful decision is given by their Savior and Judge, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

2. "Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire,

prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto Thee? Then shall He answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me."

It is noteworthy that our Lord does not mention the great crimes in which the world beholds the enormity of sin. That murder and adultery and all manner of beastliness to which the flesh prompts is condemned, every rational being is presumed to know; but the sins of omission, which indicate the absence of faith and love, are regarded among men as little faults, if they can be called faults at all. And just on that account our Lord enumerates them especially. That which condemns the soul is the estrangement from God and the selfishness which is ours by nature. Those who have no mercy upon their fellow-men in their want and suffering, thus show that their hearts have not been purified by faith, and that they are therefore still in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity. They have not been renewed by the grace that alone can save, and therefore the wrath of God abideth on them. They have inherited the sin with the curse of God that is on it, and have refused the grace by which they might have inherited the blessing; and accordingly they are pronounced cursed, and doomed to the eternal fire that was not originally prepared for men, but for the devil and his angels. It is a terrible doom, but it is the necessary outcome of God's unchangeable justice dealing with unrighteous men who refuse to be changed and rendered meet for blessedness. The wicked who are con-

demned would not live under the King of saints, and serve Him in His kingdom; they chose rather to remain in their sin and to serve Satan, and must now accept the wages of their work. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."

Dear brethren, the gospel of God's grace has been given us that we might be brought into the kingdom of our Lord and be found in readiness when He comes to judge the earth. Have you received that grace in vain? "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Savior, Jesus Christ." Tit. 2, 11–13. It hath appeared to you for this merciful purpose: is its end being accomplished in your hearts and lives? The Lord will surely come in His glory to the final reckoning, and may come very soon: are you ready? A matter of such vast, such eternal moment to your souls must not be delayed. Our opportunity is now, when Jesus calls. Let us give earnest heed to His Word, that when He comes we may be greeted with the happy welcome, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Amen.

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